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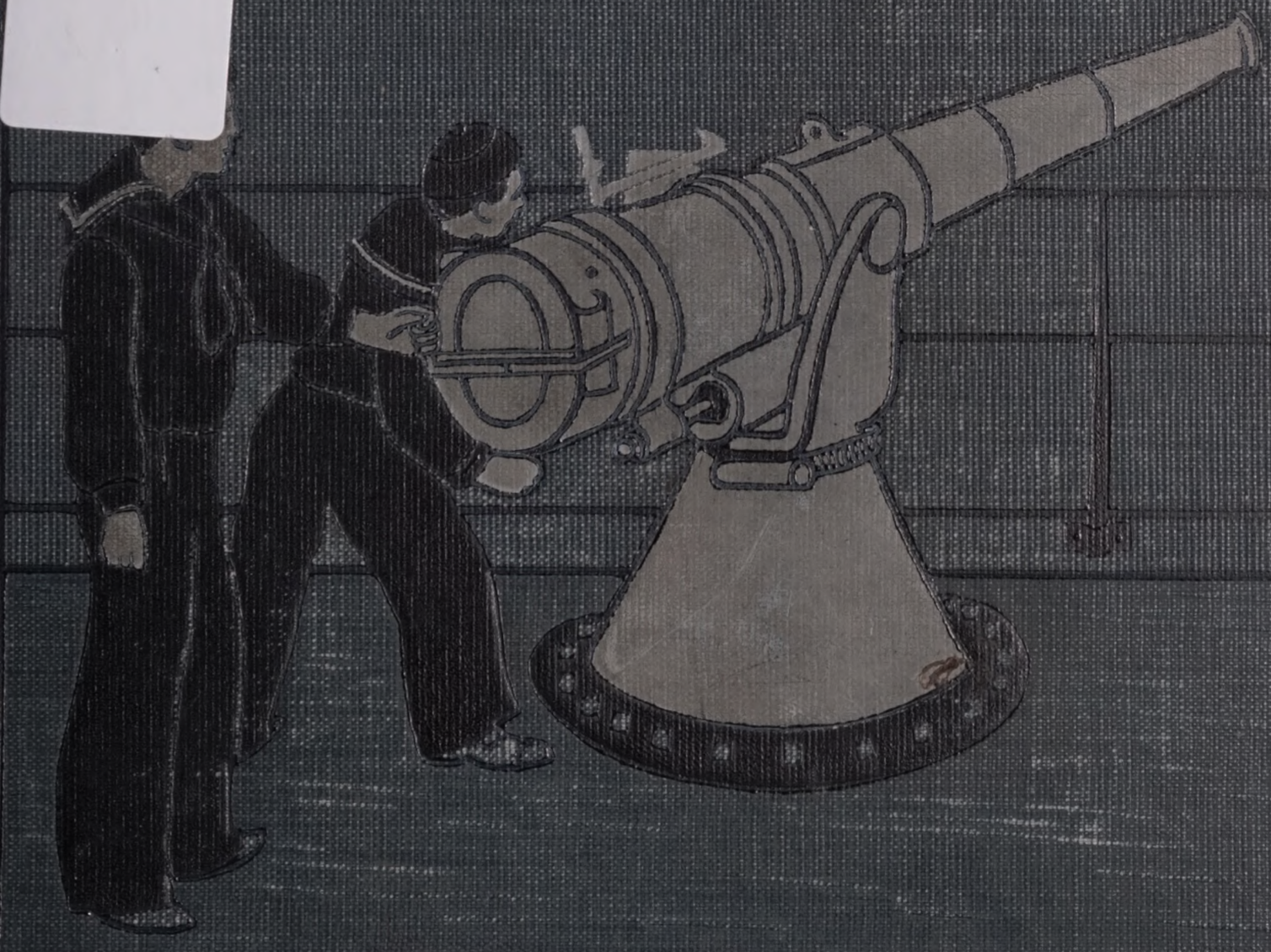

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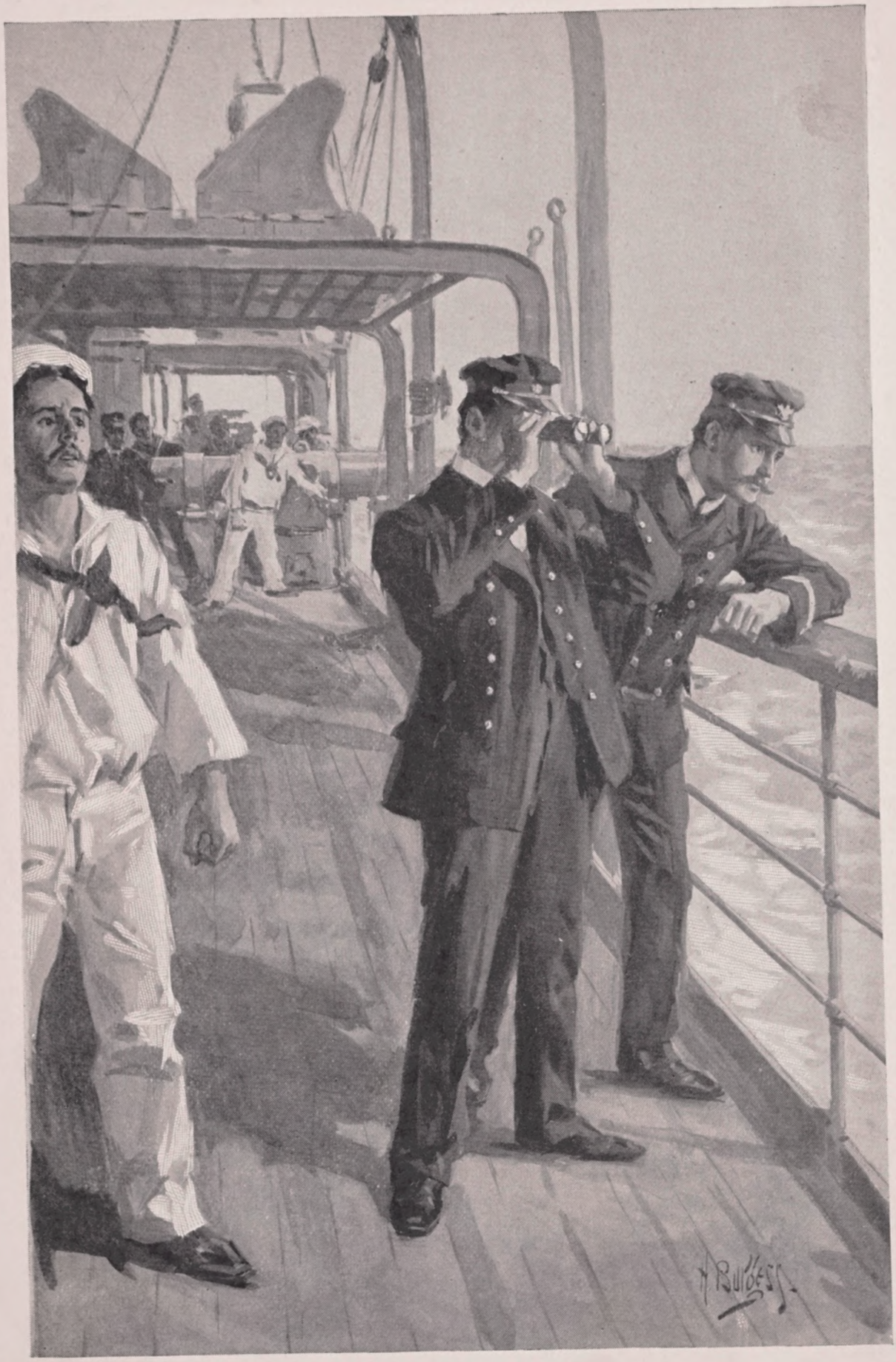

"'SHE'LL GET A GENTLE HINT IN A MINUTE OR TWO.'"

CADET STANDISH OF THE ST. LOUIS

A STORY OF OUR NAVAL CAMPAIGN IN CUBAN WATERS

BY

WILLIAM DRYSDALE

AUTHOR OF "THE YOUNG REPORTER," "THE FAST MAIL," "THE BEACH PATROL," "THE YOUNG SUPERCARGO," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. BURGESS.

BOSTON AND CHICAGO

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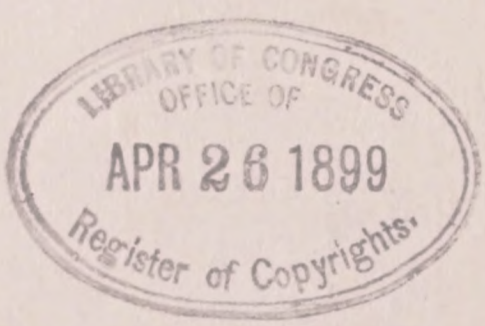

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PREFACE.

THE writer, the artist, and the publishers of CADET STANDISH unite in expressing their thanks to the International Navigation Company (American Line) for valuable assistance in making the story and the illustrations true to life.

To the artist the Company kindly supplied photographs and drawings of their ships at sea and in action; and although these are not reproduced in their original form, they furnish the details as to ship and armament, which enable the artist to make the illustrations thoroughly accurate.

The writer is deeply indebted to the obliging officers of the Company for much information regarding the war-service of the *St. Louis* and her armament, and for important suggestions and papers, — among the latter an abridged copy of the war-log of the ship, showing her whereabouts on every day of her naval service. All of the suggestions he has gladly followed, except where for the purposes of the story he has sometimes, in minor affairs, slightly changed the dates of the ship's movements; and for the same reason he persists in shooting away a few feet of her rail in Guantanamo Bay, although she happily went through the war without injury.

Captain J. E. Brady, the President's confidential agent at Tampa during the war (he who met Cadet Standish at Port Tampa and telegraphed his important news to Washington), should also be thanked for the insight he gave the writer into the workings of the Government's Secret Service in time of war. During the Santiago campaign the writer frequently stood by Captain Brady's side at the army headquarters in Tampa, at one end of a wire whose other end was in the White House, and saw the President instantly informed of the most minute happenings, at all hours of the day and night.

With such sources of information (to which must be added important data supplied by the Navy Department), coupled with the writer's lifelong acquaintance with Santiago and Cuba, and the Catskill region in which the story opens, it is confidently believed that the young reader will find in CADET STANDISH not only a romance which may perchance amuse him, but accurate descriptions of places and events that may prove of more lasting benefit.

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CADET STANDISH OF THE ST. LOUIS.

CHAPTER I.

HARD TIMES IN CAIRO.

WHEN I take you up to the attic to introduce you to Mrs. George W., you must regard that as a high compliment; for only our best friends are taken into the attic. Any casual stranger, even a peddler or a book agent, may be shown into the parlor; but the attic is the heart of the house, where our shop-worn treasures are kept and where our private little romances live. Only specially favored ones are admitted to the attic.

Kindly take particular notice of the initials — Mrs. George W. I make this request for your own protection, to prevent your confusing her with Mrs. William J. These two ladies, both widows, both living in the same house, and both bearing the family name of Standish, are sure to become confused in your mind unless they are carefully distinguished at the beginning. In Cairo, where they live, people never think of

calling either of them Mrs. Standish; it is always Mrs. George W. or Mrs. William J. By this plan much confusion is avoided, and we cannot do better than adopt it.

And there is another matter to be settled as we go up the attic stairs. That word Cairo. When you speak of Cairo in Egypt, you naturally pronounce it Ki-ro. That is right for the town in Egypt, but it will not do at all for the town in New York. This is no imaginary place I am taking you to, but a real town of streets and stores and houses that you can find for yourself on any good map. If you have the curiosity to look, find the village of Catskill, on the Hudson River, and then go ten miles nearly due west. There, beyond Leeds, and on beyond South Cairo, you will find Cairo, which, being a real place, is inhabited by real people, who call their town Ka-ro; and as common usage is what determines the pronunciation of proper names, we have no choice in the matter, but must call our Cairo, Ka-ro.

We can go leisurely up three or four of the uncarpeted attic steps, and, standing with our heads just above the level of the floor, take time to get our bearings. Even at this distance we are welcomed by the mixed odors of mint and sage, savory, marjoram, tansy, and thyme, coming from fat bunches of herbs that dangle from the rafters. The spicy perfume of wood comes from the big cedar chest, brought from Honduras many years ago. And our sense of smell tells us that

somewhere about are strings of onions, bags of hops, and at least part of a box of laundry soap.

It is a large room, covering the entire top of the house, so high in the middle that the tallest man could not touch the roof, and tapering down to almost nothing under the eaves. And it is none too light, for the windows are small. But our eyes soon become accustomed to the dusk, and we see the retired treasures of the Standish family. In one corner is a great assortment of broken or worn-out furniture; chairs, tables, old book shelves, a broken folding bed, and many other things. In another corner, a heap of old trunks and boxes that look as it they had seen long service. On a big table in the centre are cases and canisters containing household stores, candles, unroasted coffee, popcorn, spices, and last year's walnuts. In a third corner are boxes and barrels carefully packed with worn-out clothes and linens that cannot be thrown away because they "may come in handy." The fourth corner is empty, for there the stairs go up.

By the little front window, well under the eaves, there stands a big trunk of black leather, bound with strong iron bands. But at this moment it is drawn out far enough to allow the lid to open and lean back against the sloping roof, revealing a layer of old account books and carefully folded papers tied in packages with pink tape. A retired rocking-chair with a weak back and worn covering has been drawn up in

front of the trunk; and in the chair Mrs. George W. is sitting, a package of the folded papers lying untied in her lap, in her hands a large sheet of parchment opened out, discolored with age, creased from long folding, and worn and soiled at the creases. There is a great red seal upon the parchment, and it bears every evidence of being an old-fashioned legal document.

"Ah, me!" she sighs, looking wistfully at the written page before her and shaking it to smooth out the springy folds. "If George W. had only lived, who knows what this bit of paper might have been worth to us! William J. did his best, but when we came to a tight place it was always George W. who pulled us through."

This thinking of her lost husband brings the moisture to Mrs. George W.'s eyes, and she lets the parchment fall to her lap and takes out her handkerchief. Giving way to her feelings is an unusual luxury to her, and perhaps she enjoys it all the more on that account. On three hundred and sixty days in the year she is as cheery a little lady as we could find in the whole of Cairo, though the gray in her hair and the lines about her eyes would show an experienced observer that her troubles have cut deep, for she is still too young to bear such marks of age.

"I don't know what we *are* going to do," she goes on, forcing back the tears. "Times are so bad, people can't pay us our little interest, and there are four mouths to feed. How Gil would worry if he knew!

But his troubles will come soon enough, poor boy, and he tries so hard to help along. It seems to me as if we *must* get back some of the money we paid for these old Spanish deeds."

But the slamming of a door and a quick footstep downstairs cause Mrs. George W. suddenly to change her position in the chair and the very expression of her face. She puts the handkerchief out of sight as if it were a sign of guilt. The footstep comes rapidly up the lower stairs and across the hall, and strikes the attic stairs, and finds her smiling and looking carelessly at the paper. There is a rush up the narrow stairs, and Gil Standish bursts into the attic.

"Now, then, little mother, this won't do!" he exclaims, stooping down and putting his arm around her neck. "I know what it means when you come up here to the black trunk. It means a fit of the dumps."

Her face fairly beams as she looks up to expostulate; and surely she may be excused if any mother has a right to be proud of her boy, for Gil Standish is a boy to be proud of. A big boy, so stout and strong that he has to be very gentle and careful when he takes hold of his little mother. Seventeen years would be a fair guess, and tall for his age, with the thick and wavy chestnut hair of his grandfather Standish, and his mother's rich brown eyes, and a clear brown skin, tinged with red, that came from keeping good hours and breathing the pure air of the Catskill Mountains. Un-

doubtedly he is a handsome boy, but he is more than that. Those brown eyes look straight at you; that big sunburned paw gives a hearty squeeze; honesty and truth and self-dependence are written in every line of his face. His shoulders are so well thrown back, his carriage so erect, that the Cairo boys, coupling his appearance with his name, call him Sir Miles Standish.

"I was just looking over some of your father's papers, Gil," she answers, turning her eyes again toward the parchment.

"Now, mother, don't you try to pull the wool over my eyes," Gil laughs. "Can't I see that that's one of the Spanish deeds you have? And don't I know that you can't read a single word of Spanish?"

"Why, yes I can, Gil," his mother protests, holding the paper to the light. "See here, 'Señor don George W. Standish, y Señor don William J. Standish.' That comes in several times, and I can read every word of it and understand it, all but the 'y,' which must mean 'and,' I suppose."

"Yes, the 'y' means 'and,'" Gil assents, "though it is pronounced like our 'e.' It's a good thing Uncle William J. taught Rose and me to speak and read Spanish like natives, or we might never know what was in the deeds at all."

He stops long enough to draw another chair from the pile of broken furniture, and seats himself by his mother's side.

"But you didn't come up here to read about 'Señor don George W. Standish,' mother," he goes on. Gil's voice and manner alone are enough to cheer a despondent person, for he is always good-humored and happy. "You never come up among the garret ghosts unless you have a fit of the blues. I've always noticed that."

"Why, Gil!" his mother protests, looking at him as innocently as if she hardly knew what he meant by "the blues." "I want to know all about these papers, for the future doesn't look bright, and it seems as if we *must* get something out of all this property."

"Well, we're rich enough in property," Gil laughs, "though we don't get enough out of it to buy our salt. But I don't see why you should say the future doesn't look bright, for I think it is very promising. There can be no doubt that we actually own this big coffee estate in Cuba — several good lawyers gave Uncle William J. that opinion. It would be very little use to us just now, even if we had it, with the rebellion going on in Cuba. But the rebellion can't last always, and then things will be changed down there. Besides, by that time I'll be old enough to know something, and I can go down and look after it.

"Ah, but it's not the coffee estate that's worrying my little mother just now," he goes on, winding his big arm around her waist. "It's hard times and lack of money in the Standish family. Don't I hear them talking about hard times in the stores? and don't I

know that in bad times the farmers can't pay the interest on their mortgages, so the Standishes must go without? Yes, I know what's on the little mother's mind, and it makes me sore enough to think that such a hulk of a fellow as I am should be eating the beef without sense enough to earn some more. To be sure I did work down at Jason's store as long as there was any work to do; but times are bad there too, and there ain't many people in Cairo at this time of year."

"You shan't say a word against yourself," his mother interrupts, with great decision. "You're the most industrious boy in the world. You've never had a chance."

"Because I've never made one, mother," Gil answers, looking much more serious than before. "But I know how things stand, for I have eyes in my head; and I have made up my mind to this: I am big enough now, and this summer *I'm* going to take care of the family."

"Oh, Gil!" his mother cries, throwing an arm about his neck; "you wouldn't go away and leave me!"

"There might come a time," he replies, quite seriously, "when we should both think it best for me to go away for a while. But that is not what I mean now. If you consent to my plan, I am going to make some money this summer by taking boarders."

"Boarders!" Mrs. George W. cries, throwing up her hands. "Oh, Gil, I am not strong enough to take boarders."

"I don't want you to take them, mother," Gil laughs, "and wouldn't let you do it if I could help it, nor Aunt Ellen either. But I can take them myself, with some help from Rose, if you will let me."

"My dear boy," Mrs. George W. expostulates, "I'm afraid you don't know what it means to take boarders. The house is not large enough, to begin with. And we cannot afford just now to buy the furniture we should need."

"I have thought it all out," Gil persists. "The old folding bed will be my bed in the attic. If you and Aunt Ellen and Rose can make out for a few months in the big back room, we will have three sleeping-rooms to spare. Some of this old furniture can be repaired, and what we must buy I can get a few months' credit for. Rose and I can get the house ready, if she will help; and you know I am a pretty good cook.

"I don't see why we shouldn't do it," he continues. "You know nearly every one in Cairo takes summer boarders, and the hotels are always full. It is a good place on account of the fine view of the mountains, and people make money at it. Why not we as well as the rest?"

Before Mrs. George W. can reply, more footsteps are heard downstairs, and a voice calling: —

"Mary! Mary! where in the world are you?"

"Here in the attic," Mrs. George W. calls in answer.

"Come up, you and Rose, and hear what Gil has been saying to me."

There is a heavy tread upon the stairs, and in a few moments Mrs. William J. appears. She is taller than Gil's mother, and very much stouter, and the climb makes her pant. Immediately behind her is her daughter Rose, the finest girl of fourteen in the Catskills, as Gil sometimes says and always believes. His description of her would be far too flowery; but she is, in fact, a bright and healthy and well-grown girl, as full of good nature as her cousin, with a wealth of flowing hair and hazel eyes that give promise, at least, of helping her to grow into a very pretty young lady.

Gil promptly gives his own chair to his aunt and draws out another for his cousin Rose; and Mrs. George W., seeing greater possibilities in the boarder project than she has so far admitted, loses no time in getting Mrs. William J.'s opinion of it.

"Gil has just been proposing that we take summer boarders," she says. "He is to sleep in the attic, and we three will have the big back room. He and Rose are to do most of the work. What do you think of it?"

"What fun!" Rose cries, clapping her hands. "We will do *all* the work."

"Gil has more sense than any of us," Mrs. William J. answers, mopping her round face with her handkerchief, but smiling through it all; "though to tell the

truth I have thought of it myself. We're in need of money just now, so why not go to work and earn it like anybody else? But those two children do the work? Do tell! We'll all help at it. Sit still, Rose; you make me nervous."

Gil and his cousin are exchanging glances at a furious rate, showing that they are excellent friends. Gil is about to explain his plans again, when a loud knocking is heard at the front door.

"Must be that Miss Prout, about that mission box. We'd better go down, Ellen," Mrs. George W. says. "The young boarding-house keepers can fold away the papers and put the trunk back in place."

CHAPTER II.

A CUBAN COFFEE PLANTATION.

WHEN the two cousins were left alone together in the attic, Gil's first act was just what any of his friends would have predicted. He went to the rocking-chair his mother had occupied, drew it to a better place in the light, shook up the cushion, and insisted that Rose should sit in it.

This was characteristic of his constant treatment of Rose. In his opinion the Princess of Wales or the Empress of Russia would have been honored by knowing her, and he never was able to do quite as much for her as he thought he should. That she should carry a pail of water or do an errand when he was about was not to be thought of. The difference of several years in their ages would have made it natural for him to consider himself the leader and superior in their little affairs, but the fact was quite the contrary. He not only asked her opinion upon all occasions, but believed in it and acted upon it. They were as much chums as any two boys could have been, the only difference being that in this case one chum made it his business to take all the

hard knocks and unpleasant things to himself, smoothing the way always for the other.

No one knew as well as Gil himself why he held so high an opinion of his cousin. It was not only because they had been thrown together like brother and sister; not only because family affairs had given them things in common that even brother and sister do not often have. It was more because Rose was, in Gil's forcible language, "a brick." He admired her sturdy character, her readiness to deny herself for others, and her pure grit. No walk that he could take was too long for her, no mountain climb too steep. If she had been a "missy" girl, he would certainly have been kind to her, but he could not have adopted her for a chum.

"That is a great idea of yours, taking summer boarders, Gil," she began. "Everybody says it is hard work, but I guess you and I can work as hard as any one. Both our mothers think well of it, I know; and you may be sure I will do my part."

Gil was on his knees in front of the trunk, straightening the books and papers that his mother had disarranged, and he turned to Rose and told her that it was no part of his plan that she should have any of the hard work to do. Their mothers would not believe that such a thing could be done without a woman's hand at the helm, and for that reason alone he had spoken of her.

Simple a thing as this was to say, it would have

surprised any one who chanced to overhear it, because Gil spoke entirely in Spanish; and when Rose answered she used the same language. They were both natives of Greene County and both good Americans without any foreign mixture in their blood, but they were as familiar with Spanish as with English, and when alone often used the Spanish language to keep in practice.

For five or ten minutes they discussed the summer-boarder plan, continuing to use the foreign tongue. Then Gil stood up to push the trunk back to its place under the eaves, holding out his hand for the papers that Rose had been smoothing and folding.

"I wish you would explain these things to me, Gil," she said, looking at the folded deeds instead of handing them to him. "It always seems so strange to me that you and I should be the only boy and girl in Cairo who can speak Spanish. I never saw any one else who could, except papa. And it is queer that we should have all these Spanish account books and deeds and papers in the attic, when none of us have ever been beyond the shadow of the mountains in our lives. Of course I have heard of the coffee plantation in Cuba, but I never quite understood it. Do you know all about it?"

"Yes, I think I understand it pretty well," Gil replied. "Your father told me all about it over and over, and very carefully, so that I must remember,

You see I was so much older than you that I could remember it better. He said he knew that he was — that he wasn't going to live long, and that it would lie with me some day to see the wrong righted, so I must understand it thoroughly. I suppose you didn't know at the time why he made you learn Spanish, when you were so young. He said that I must learn it, because I could not do much in Cuba without knowing the language; and that unless I had somebody to talk to after he was — if anything happened to him, I would soon forget it. So you had to learn too; and that's the way we came to know it so well; for he spoke it like a native, and took great pains to teach us. So there's one mystery cleared away. You know now why we are the only boy and girl in Cairo who can speak Spanish."

"Yes, I understand that part of it," Rose replied. "But why did you have to speak Spanish? What were we doing with a coffee plantation in Cuba? And where did it go to?"

"Ah, that's one of the queer things that I understand happen sometimes in this world!" Gil laughed. "You see our grandfather Standish (for he was your grandfather and mine too) owned the old farm that we still have a claim on, and when he died he left it to his two sons, George W., my father, and William J., your father. That's plain, isn't it? So here we have our two fathers, both very young men, owning the old farm.

"Very well. My father was satisfied to stay here among the mountains and be a farmer, but yours wasn't. Your father went to New York and became a clerk for a big importing house, and then a bookkeeper, and after a while a junior partner. The folks thought that was very grand, but it wasn't enough to satisfy your father. He was full of pluck and daring, just like you; and he was always on the watch to improve his affairs.

"One day the chance came, as he thought. His firm did a big business with the West Indies, and in that way he learned about a fine coffee plantation in Cuba, near Santiago, that had to be sold. It was making money, but the owner was involved in other affairs and had lost, and the estate had to go, and was sure to be sold cheap. So your father went down there to investigate.

"To make a long story short, he bought it. It was a very large plantation, about seven thousand acres, and even at a quarter its value it took a lot of money to buy it. He explained all about it to my father, and they went into partnership. Your father had saved some money by that time, and so had mine, and for the rest they mortgaged the farm. Why, what's the matter, Rose? You look as if you were going to a funeral."

"I begin to feel so, Gil," she replied. "Was it my father's fault that so much money was lost in the coffee plantation?"

"Nobody was at fault," Gil was quick to answer; "and we don't know yet that any money has been lost. Wait till you hear about it. About all the money our two fathers could raise went into the plantation, and the firm was George W. and William J. Standish. That was after they were both married; but your father never took you and your mother to Cuba. When he left New York you came up to the farm to live with us.

"Well, that was the beginning of changed times in the Standish family. Your father went to Cuba alone to manage the plantation, and mine stayed at home to manage the farm. For a year or two there was nothing made, and then the folks began to feel rich. They say the way money came up from the plantation for a few seasons was enough to make your mouth water."

"Oh, my!" Rose exclaimed. "Just think of it! I never knew of people getting in money so fast it surprised them; it's generally the other way. Let's try to imagine it's still coming, and that all these trunks and boxes are full of doubloons and pieces of eight!"

"That couldn't last, you know," Gil went on. "Such things never do, I suppose. When you begin to think you're well off, is just the time to look out for a drop. And the drop came for the Standish family, at a great rate. First father fell sick, and we came in from the farm and bought this place in the village, to be near the doctor. You and your mother came too, but I guess you were too young to remember it. Then bad

news began to come from your father. The present insurrection was just breaking out, and the insurgents, as they call them, made demands on him for food and money; and he had to pay, too, or they would have destroyed his crops.

"That was only the beginning. Father's complaint was not helped any, I guess, by the troubles, and before long we laid him away in the cemetery up on the Durham road. Then word came that the Spanish government had seized the plantation, on the ground that your father had been giving assistance to the rebels. That was pretty hard, because he had nothing to do with it, and only gave them something to save the rest of his property. But what could he do? They had the power, and they took possession.

"It never rains but it pours," Gil continued. "Next came the news that your father had been driven off the place, and was dying with yellow fever in Santiago. Then no news at all for weeks. Ah, those were dreadful times, and I'm glad you were too young to know much about them. We waited and waited, and cabled without getting any answer. Your mother was almost crazy, when one day there came a telegram from your father, saying that he had landed in New York and was on his way home. Sure enough, the Catskill stage drove up next day, and he got out. You must remember that day, I guess, and how we hardly knew him, he was so thin and yellow and old-looking. He could

scarcely walk, but he managed to get home, and bring this trunk along filled with his papers.

"That was the day this black trunk came into the house, and here it has been ever since. So instead of a plantation we had a claim; and claims don't pay very large interest, I've noticed. There was no doubt about the claim, for all the lawyers said so. The worst of it was your father was so broken down by the fever that the doctors said he could not possibly live long, and he was in a hurry to get his affairs settled. The only way, the lawyers said, was to get our government to make a claim on the Spaniards, because your father was an American citizen. He was hardly able to travel, but your mother went with him to Washington to see the Secretary of State.

"Such a thing is always slow work," Gil went on, "but in this case it was slower than ever. They said it was certainly a good claim, because the place had been taken by force, without process of law. But Cuba was in such an unsettled state it was impossible to do anything with it then. He must wait till the rebellion was over. If the insurgents won, he might get the estate back without much trouble; and if the Spaniards won, they must give it up or pay for it. But anyhow he must wait."

"Wasn't that mean!" Rose interrupted; "and papa so sick he knew he couldn't live long. I'd like to get a chance at those nasty Spaniards some day."

"Some day we may get our rights," Gil continued. "But you see how helpless that left your father. He could do nothing till the Cuban rebellion was over, and that might last for several years. I am sure he did not expect to live that long, and his only hope was to have some of us understand the case thoroughly, so that when the time came we could assert our rights. I was about twelve then, and he just set to work at me and drilled all the facts into me, and made me learn to speak and write Spanish.

"My, how hard he did work with me! A man can do a lot of work when he has one important thing to do before he dies. Don't cry, Rosie dear; that's all over now."

"I'm not crying for that!" Rose retorted, in a voice that gave Gil a start. "I'm not crying at all." And she was not, either; but she was grating her teeth. "Those cheating Spaniards! My, how I wish I were a man!"

"You are, Rose," Gil declared. "At least you are more of a man than any other girl I ever saw. But you were too young then for your father to leave you such an important charge, so he turned to me. 'Gil,' he said to me one day, 'you're a good deal of a man for your age.' (He was mistaken, but that was what he said.) 'But I want you to be still more of a man from this minute, for you have a man's work before you. In a short time I shall be

gone, and you will soon be the head of the family: and you are the one who must get our property back. To do that you must know all about the case, and I am going to drill it into you like a lesson at school. You will not understand it now, but you will when you grow older.'"

"That's what they tell me about so many things," Rose interrupted. "I wonder how old I shall have to be before I understand about business, and deeds, and coffee plantations."

"No levity, señorita!" Gil protested, pretending to be very severe. "He told me that I must not only know the whole story, but must know the meaning of all the deeds and papers. And, besides that, I must know the Spanish language, or I never could make any headway in Cuba. And more than that, you must learn Spanish, too, so that we could talk together. 'No matter if you have to give up all your other studies,' he told me, 'I'm going to give you both a good working knowledge of the Spanish language, if I have to whale it into you with a hickory gad."

"I have a sort of a dim recollection," said Rose, blushing a little, "that he kept his word about that."

"He kept his word about everything," Gil continued. "That is why we know more about Spanish than we could learn in almost any school. He not only taught us the language of the people, but their customs; so that I could go to Cuba to-morrow and

mix with the people without being taken for an American."

"Then there *is* a chance that some day we may get the plantation back, or the value of it?" Rose asked.

"More than a chance, I think," Gil replied. "But not till the Cuban rebellion is ended. We must wait, and while we are waiting we need not be idle. Now you know the whole story of the black trunk and its contents, señorita; and remember that you are my partner in the boarding-house business."

"Yes, and in the plantation business, too," Rose retorted. "And if ever you have a chance to repay the Spaniards for the way they have wronged us, I shall be your partner there also."

CHAPTER III.

PREPARING TO "TAKE BOARDERS."

THE Standish house stands well back from the main street in Cairo, a little to the eastward of the Presbyterian Church and on the opposite side. It is a wooden house like every other dwelling in the place except two, which are built of brick. There is a large lawn in front and at the side — or what would be a lawn if it were not for the big oak trees, which give it a dark shade and prevent the grass from doing its best. The easiest way to find the place in going down the street is just to ask for the Timbury house. Old Mrs. Timbury lived and died in it, and Gil's father bought it from her distant heirs, and it still goes by the old name.

It was built long before New Yorkers discovered Cairo and made it a place for summer holidays; but if it had been designed for the purpose it could hardly be better arranged for the accommodation of a few boarders. There is a piazza across the front, from which a door opens at the left-hand side into a broad hall, and to the right of this is the parlor. But when you go back of the parlor and hall the house broadens con-

siderably, jutting out eight or ten feet on each side, and so giving space for two fine large rooms, one of which is devoted to sitting and the other to dining. Still farther back is the kitchen, so large that a family coach might be kept in it, and so clean, like most Cairo kitchens, that you must step carefully over the well-scrubbed floor. And between dining room and kitchen a series of pantries and closets, and everything throughout as snug and handy as it can possibly be made without those things we have come to call "the modern conveniences." In Cairo you need not stop to wonder which is the hot-water spigot and which the cold, for water comes only from the well, and that is always cold. And in the absence of gas no one has ever yet been asphyxiated.

This knowledge of the lower floor will give you an easy clue to the upper. There is a big front room over the parlor, of course, with an alcove over the hall; and two good rooms over the dining and sitting rooms, with a hall between; and a big, sunny room over the kitchen, with windows overlooking the green meadows at the back, and, far away, the big county almshouse, and in the distance the dark mountain peaks. And the house is painted the lightest of light browns, with edgings a shade or two darker, and green blinds to the windows. A gable in the roof, I must not neglect to say, faces toward the front, with a small window in it — the attic window, near which the black trunk stands. And the

cornice is broad and flat, giving the house a solid appearance. And in front of all is a picket fence, also painted light brown. And about the whole place nothing is hanging loose or going to ruin; for Gil has a hammer and saw and some other tools, and knows how to use them. If the Standishes are pressed for ready money, they do not advertise the fact to the neighbors.

But it would be a waste of energy to advertise any personal affairs in Cairo, where, as in most small towns, the public knows all your concerns, and more. Mrs. George W. and Mrs. William J. had hardly come to a decision before it was noised about in the stores and discussed in the sewing circle that "the Standishes were going to take summer boarders." It took just twenty-four hours for the whole town to know the news. On the day after his talk with Rose, Gil went down to Jason's to make some inquiries.

"I may be wanting to buy a little furniture," he said, "and to buy it on credit, if I can. This is my speculation, mind you, not my mother's, and I'm to pay the bill myself. I am thinking of taking some boarders this coming summer."

There was not the least doubt in his mind that Jason would have whatever he needed, for Jason's is celebrated for keeping everything. There are other stores in Cairo, but none with half the reputation of Jason's, down by the bridge. It has been written

about in magazines, and visited by antiquarians, and for half a century has been known as the place "where you can buy anything, from a tombstone to a fire engine." It is the veritable store where an incredulous stranger once, thinking to ask for an impossible thing, inquired for a church pulpit. "Yes," said Jason, "I bought one when they tore down the old church. Step this way." It was not Jason himself, but Jason's son D. K. (Cairo being wonderfully fond of initials) whom Gil approached.

"That's all right, Gil," D. K. readily answered. "You can have whatever you want."

"Well, I'll tell you what arrangement I want to make about paying," Gil went on. "I never owed anything before, but it looks as if I should have to this time. If I do well with the boarders, I will pay you within three months; but if I don't, you must give me three months more to earn the money in."

"All right, Gil," D. K. repeated. "Take whatever you want, and pay for it when you can. And I shouldn't tell you that if I didn't know you, you may be sure."

It was from this brief conversation that the news flashed around Cairo like a message over the wires. Jason's has its habitual loungers, like the other stores, and they whispered it at home and in public places, and the ladies talked it over, and by the next morning Miss Mary Miller, an estimable maiden lady in specta-

cles, was so interested that she determined to learn all the particulars, and to that end went to the Standish front door and rang the bell.

"Good morning, Miss Mary," said Gil, as he answered the summons. He was without coat or hat, his sleeves were rolled up, and his face was flushed with work. "We're a little torn up this morning; getting ready for boarders. Step right into the parlor, won't you, and see Rose. She's up a step ladder helping me scrape off the old paper, but she'll be glad to see you just the same."

"I want to know!" Miss Miller exclaimed, as she stepped into the dismantled room. "And you at it too, Rose? I heard tell you were going to take boarders, but I didn't know you were getting ready. And where's Mrs. George W.?"

"We're all at the same work," Rose laughed, as she jumped down from the ladder. It did not disconcert her in the least that she wore her very oldest dress and had a towel tied over her head. "Mother and Aunt Mary are upstairs, scrubbing. Come into the sitting room, and I'll call them."

When her mother and aunt came down and Rose returned to the parlor, she and Gil could not help hearing the conversation in the sitting room, for all the doors stood open.

"Yes," they heard Mrs. George W. say, "we're really getting ready to take boarders. Hate to do it?

No, indeed, I am just delighted to do it. It is Gil's idea entirely — and I am so glad he took the notion. You see he has been fretting for several years about not having anything to do, — anything to bring in money, I mean, — and I was so afraid that this year he would want to go away somewhere. I'm sure it's much better to take boarders than have Gil go and leave us."

"And do you know he wanted to do everything himself?" Mrs. William J. interrupted, "with just a little help from Rose. That was the plan he made. But we'd hardly be likely to let him do that. Now that we have made up our minds to it we're all at it hammer and tongs. Mary and I are cleaning the three front bedrooms upstairs, and Gil and Rose are preparing to paper and paint the parlor. Gil is a great hand at papering, and Rose can paint as well as a man."

Scrape, scrape, scrape, went the old table knives over the parlor walls, taking off the old paper. With a clean whitewash brush and a pail of hot water Gil had soaked it till it came off readily, and the rolls of bright new paper lay on the sitting-room table.

"But, sakes alive, where are you going to get your help?" Miss Miller asked. "Good help's so scarce in Cairo."

"Help!" Mrs. George W. laughed. "What do we want with help? You don't know Gil and Rose, I guess. And there's not one of us in the house but's

a good cook. Gil can cook as nice a meal as any woman in Greene County, and so can the rest of us. We're not going to take boarders and be afraid to work, Miss Mary. We'll take them because we need a little money; no other reason in the world; not because we 'want a little company in the house,' as some folks pretend."

Their hard work met with many interruptions that morning. One of the callers was Bob Tulley, a particular friend of Gil, who dropped his fishing-pole on the grass and rang the bell.

"Hello, Gil!" was his greeting when the door was opened. "Oh, pshaw! you ain't at work, are you? Say, can't you drop it a little while and come down to the deep hole? There's no time like these April mornings for catching suckers, and we needn't be gone more than an hour or two."

"Can't be done!" Gil laughed. "I'm afraid my fishing is laid on the shelf for this season — I mean I hope it is. We're getting ready to take boarders; and if we have any sort of success, I'll not have any time to spare this summer."

"Well, I know there's no use talking to you if you're busy," Bob answered disappointedly, and went on down the street with his pole.

There was an interval presently when the paper was all off and the newly scrubbed floors upstairs were drying, when the whole family went up into the attic

to look over the discarded furniture. In a few minutes the larger pieces were spread about for inspection. One bedstead was perfect except for a broken upright that the cabinet-maker could make as good as new, and there never had been anything the matter with the springs. The old lounge, that some boarder might be so glad to have in the bedroom for an afternoon nap, needed nothing but a new cover, which Mrs. William J. was sure she could give it. Various things that had long been out of use required only a screw here or a little glue there, such simple matters that Gil could mend them himself. It was surprising to find how good most of the old furniture was, and how much better it looked than when it was discarded.

Every day the house looked better and brighter, and every day Gil expostulated with mother, aunt, and cousin for doing so much work themselves instead of leaving more for him. The parlor shone in its new paper and fresh paint. The bedrooms were as clean as new pins, and the paint touched up wherever it needed it. And when the furniture was in place, and it came to arranging the little things and making the rooms look as little like boarding-house rooms as possible, Gil had to admit that women's hands were better than his own. He could put up the bedsteads and drag around the bureaus, but after he had struggled for half an hour with placing the fancy things on a dressing-case the general effect was, as he expressed it, "as if

it had been struck by lightning," and Rose had to go to his rescue.

After all, there were not as many things to be bought as they had feared. A single bedstead and a mattress for it, a mattress for one of the big beds, a bureau, and a comfortable rocking-chair for each of the three rooms, that was all, except that the stock of linen had to be replenished. The whole bill amounted to a trifle less than fifty dollars; and Gil was surprised to find that from the moment he bought the goods there was a weight upon his mind. He actually owed fifty dollars! He had never owed a cent to any one before; and if he had not been working so hard, the thought of it would have kept him awake at night in his broken folding bed, now mended, up in the attic. Fifty dollars to be paid in three months; and suppose the boarders failed to come!

Making a house ready for summer boarders is a matter easy to describe, but the work is not done so easily or so quickly. April passed, and more than half of May, before they felt that everything was in complete order. Even then there was still some work to do in the yard, but it was time to make some effort to catch the golden birds that were to occupy the snug cage they had prepared. There was no doubt about the means to be used, for every cage-keeper in Cairo catches his birds in the same way, — by advertising in the New York newspapers. But it lay with Gil to

write the advertisement; and that was a far harder task than papering the parlor.

With pad and pencil he went up to the attic, to have perfect quiet for his first venture in literature; and if all the advertisements he wrote only to be torn off and crumpled up had been printed and paid for, they would have eaten up the profits of the entire season. Some were too flowery, others too dreadfully plain. But there was no danger of his giving up what he undertook, and after a tremendous mental strain he produced one that seemed to describe the situation: —

"*Cairo.* — Three large sunny rooms in private house, with good home cooking. Large grounds and beautiful mountain views. Terms reasonable. — Gilbert Standish, Cairo, N.Y."

That brief notice, having been not only approved but highly complimented by the rest of the family, was mailed to the *New York Daily Newsletter*, with the necessary money order enclosed, and arrived in due time in lines of real print, Rose having spent much of the time meanwhile wondering whether their boarders would be real nice people with a girl about her own age, and Gil having given his attention to the front and side yard, which he raked up so clean that hardly a blade of grass was out of place, and put the front walk in order.

Then followed a few days of anxious waiting for

letters on Gil's part, but no letters came, except a few announcements from other newspapers, telling how cheaply they would print that advertisement, and how large their circulation was.

"I thought you were going to take boarders this summer?" Bob Tulley asked on one of these days, without the least intention to be sarcastic.

"So we are," Gil answered, "if we can get any. They haven't come yet."

"Why, nearly every place is full," Bob went on. "They're turning people away over at Walters's Hotel."

Gil knew that only too well, for he kept his eyes open. Not only the hotels, but most of the private boarding-houses were full. He gave a laughing answer, for he was not one to show the anxiety he felt, but he could not help thinking that the whole art of keeping boarders did not consist in getting the house ready. And all the while the load of a fifty-dollar debt weighed upon his shoulders.

One day there came a ray of hope, when a lady and gentleman walked over from the Walters Hotel to look at rooms. Mrs. William J., who opened the door for them, was ready to show everything to the very best advantage, but they would not even go upstairs. As there were no other boarders, it would not do at all. They had a grown daughter, and must be in a lively place where she would have company.

"Well, we must make the best of it," Mrs. George W. began to say. "If nobody comes, we can pay that little furniture bill somehow; and the house is all in good order, whatever happens."

"Now don't you be getting discouraged, mother," Gil answered to this. "Nobody can build up a good business in a day. We are sure to get boarders sooner or later." And this very last time he tried to comfort his mother, he added, "Like as not there's a letter in the post-office now. I'm going to walk down and see."

It hardly needed the letter in his hand as he came running back, to show that he had at least heard from some one; his pleased expression was enough to show that.

"I don't know," he answered to Rose's eager questions, "whether it is going to amount to anything or not, but here is certainly a letter from some one who is looking for board."

He took the letter out and read it aloud without delay, for his mother and Aunt Ellen were quite as anxious as Rose.

"International Navigation Company, American Line, Red Star Line," he read: "General Superintendent's office, H. G. Merrifield, General Superintendent, New York, May 28, 1896.

"DEAR SIR: Are the rooms still vacant that you advertised a short time ago? And if so, what are

your terms per week for self and wife, boy and girl?

"Please reply immediately; and if rooms vacant, and terms satisfactory, will visit your place next Monday to look at them.

"Yours truly,

"H. G. MERRIFIELD."

Here was Gil's first opportunity for really doing business. Before, there had been nothing but preparation, but this was a possible customer. What prices should be charged had been talked over often and carefully, and ten dollars a week had been determined upon, and six dollars for children. That was high for Cairo, where board is cheap; but they wisely thought that by charging reasonably well, and giving the full value of the money in good rooms and good board, they would secure a better class of customers.

"I'm glad we determined to charge a fair price and make it worth the money," Gil said, as he sat down to answer the letter at once. "The superintendent of a big steamship line can't think ten dollars a week very high, and he might turn up his nose at it if it was too cheap."

It was a matter of great importance to them, he thought, the answer to that letter. But if he had known how vast the importance; how the letter, with its consequences, was to change the whole course of his

life and the circumstances of the family, his hand might have shaken a little as he held the pen. Fortunately he could not foresee that. To be able to see into the future would bring us far more pain than pleasure.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUMMONS INTO THE WORLD.

BY the middle of August the Standish family had settled down wonderfully well into the business, or perhaps the fine art, of keeping boarders; and it certainly looked for a time as if Gil might make that his permanent occupation. Mr. Merrifield and his family were the only boarders, and there was room for no more, for they occupied all three of the rooms.

The labor was well divided, and moved like clockwork. Gil's proposition that all the hard work should fall upon him had been laughed to scorn at the beginning, and everybody lent a hand. Mrs. George W. and Mrs. William J. were the cooks, Rose took care of the rooms, and Gil was steward, butler, head waiter, and general provider. Besides all their other duties, he and Rose washed the dishes and kept the silver and glassware bright. No hotel in the whole Catskills had a better corps of "help," and the boarders appreciated it.

Several things had happened by that time that led Mr. Merrifield to take more than a passing interest in Gil — all small things, but all, as it proved, of some importance. One of the first of these came about

through Gil's insisting that he should wait upon the table; and with the open doors of summer and the thin walls of a country house, Mr. Merrifield accidentally overheard the conversation.

"Yes, that must be my work," Gil asserted. "You and Aunt Ellen will be busy in the kitchen, and Rose has enough to do. The waiting falls to me, and I am going to do it."

"But the idea of my boy being a waiter in a boarding-house!" Mrs. George W. protested.

"My mother seems to be a cook in a boarding-house," Gil laughed; "so why should I be too proud to be the waiter? That's all nonsense. I should be ashamed to be too good for my business. I'm going to be the waiter, and I'll try to be a good one."

Buying the provisions for a family of eight was not a small part of the work, in a village where there are no markets, and that all fell to Gil. The neighboring farmers turn themselves into peddlers in the summer, and make daily rounds of the hotels and boarding-houses with their wagons, selling poultry, butter, berries, vegetables, whatever they can produce; and it did not take them long to learn that there were boarders at the Timbury house.

"Can I sell you some butter this morning?" one of them asked, standing on the side steps. He had left his wagon by the side of the street, and walked in with a sample pail.

"Is it good butter?" Gil asked.

"Just what you want for boarders," the man answered, with a sly wink. "Not the very tip-topest, of course; but it's only eighteen cents a pound, and you can't get it at the stores for less than twenty-two. I sell it to nearly every house in town."

"Aha!" said Mr. Merrifield to himself, quietly reading his paper behind his closed blinds upstairs; "that's one of the tricks of the trade, is it! Let's see what our young landlord has to say to that."

"That won't do at all," Gil promptly said. "I might just as well go upstairs and take the money out of my boarders' pockets. If you had some first-rate butter, I'd like to have forty or fifty pounds; but I don't use any other kind."

"Ah, you're new at the business, that's plain," the man laughed. "You'll change your mind before you've kept boarders many years."

"Then I'll change my business if I do," Gil retorted, as he went into the house; and Mr. Merrifield smiled quietly to himself.

It was about the middle of July that two important things happened in one day. In the morning Gil got the family purse from his mother, and finding more than a hundred dollars nestling in its folds, he took out forty-eight dollars and fifty cents, and walked down to Jason's and paid his bill in full. That was not exactly a weight lifted from his mind, for he had

known for some time that there was more than enough on hand to pay it; but it gave him a comfortable feeling to know that his first and only debt was paid; and when he returned and heard young Sidney Merrifield coaxing his father to take him fishing, he thought that the boy ought to have a chance.

Sidney was only a little more than twelve years old, and would have been too young for company for Gil, even if the young landlord had had any time to spare from his business, which he hadn't.

"Early in the morning is the best time for fishing, Sidney," he said, "and I am always too busy in the morning to get away. But I can manage an hour or two this afternoon to show you the way to the deep hole, and your father, too, if he likes to go. That's the best fishing-place anywhere about here."

Sidney sprang at the offer at once, but his father was afraid it might be too long a walk.

"It looks as if there might be some fish here in the dam," he said, "or in the mill-race."

"No, sir," Gil replied, "the dam is too shallow, and the mill-race too much fished out. The deep hole is the best fishing-place anywhere around here, and it's only about half a mile away. The water is deep there, thirty to forty feet, and I can show you where the fish bite best. I can't stay away long enough to do any fishing, but after you know the way you can go yourselves any morning you like."

Sidney was so anxious about it that Mr. Merrifield consented to go, and after the dinner dishes were done and put away they set out. Down the main street and over the bridge, past Jason's store, then to the right, following the Shingle-Kill Creek by a rocky road, past Guthrie's old woollen mill; then, as the road turned the wrong way, over a low stone wall they went into a field, following a path by the stream, past the bed of the old railroad that had been dead and forgotten this fifty years, past Raeder's mill, and so on down across more rocky fields, to the deep hole itself.

"That's the place, sir," Gil exclaimed, as they came suddenly upon it. "You see it's quite a big place, for such a small creek; two or three acres in extent, I should think, and very deep. This is where the boys come for a swim, but always on the other side, because that is easier to reach from town. The trick of the thing is to come this side for fishing, because it is harder to reach and fewer people come here. You see we are about twenty-five feet above the water, on the edge of a straight-up-and-down cliff. Look out, Sidney; don't get too near the edge."

Mr. Merrifield, something of a fisherman himself, had a great many questions to ask about the fish to be caught and the bait to be used; and in the midst of the conversation they heard a cry and a splash, and realized that Sidney had fallen over the cliff into the deep water.

Although neither Mr. Merrifield nor Sidney could swim a stroke, the father did not lose his presence of mind in this danger. Merely crying out "He can't swim!" Mr. Merrifield started at the top of his speed toward the opposite side of the narrow field, where, with a quick glance, he saw the remains of an old rail fence.

It was plain that he was after a rail to throw to his drowning boy; but Gil knew a better way than that. In an instant his hat and coat were off, and he stood leaning over the brink, watching for a sign. Then he was gone, and there was another splash, and by the time that Mr. Merrifield got back with a rail, Gil was climbing out of the water at a low place, further down stream, with Sidney in his arms little the worse for his mishap, but crying as if he had been drowned several times.

"You're all right, Sidney," Gil was saying; "not a bit hurt. We'll have you dry in a few minutes, and you won't know you've been overboard."

Mr. Merrifield ran down to where they were, and took the dripping Sidney in his arms, but for a minute or two he was not able to say anything. He looked at Gil, however, in a way that led the young landlord to fear a scene. Nothing was further from Gil's thoughts than the idea of his having done anything heroic. That high rock was one of his favorite diving-places, and he would have jumped off without hesitation to rescue a stray hat, let alone a boy.

"'YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, SIDNEY,' GIL WAS SAYING."

Mr. Merrifield was a man of few words, but Gil could see that he was almost upset by what he had thought the imminent danger of his boy.

"Thank you, my boy," he said, taking Gil's hand in his. "I'll not forget you for that."

"We'd better get his clothes off and wring them out, or he may catch cold," Gil replied, glad to escape so easily; and in a few minutes Sidney's clothes were wrung out and hung over a rock to dry, and the shivering boy was wrapped in Gil's coat.

Gil appeared in a dry suit at supper none the worse for his bath, and for weeks the monotony of buying butter and beefsteaks and serving them at table went on. But he minded the monotony no more than he did the labor. His first business venture was successful, the boarders seemed to be more than satisfied with everything, his debt was paid, and they were not only making their own living, but actually saving a little money.

In the early days of September, when the leaves were beginning to fall a little and the trains were carrying boarders away every day, Mr. Merrifield made an opportunity to have a short talk with Gil.

"Well, your season will soon be coming to an end now, young man," he said.

"Yes, sir," Gil replied; "I'm afraid we can't hope to have you with us all winter."

"Hardly," Mr. Merrifield laughed. "It's about once

in a lifetime that I have as long a holiday as this, specially in our busy season. But I was breaking down under the hard work, and they insisted upon my taking a rest among the mountains. You might think a steamship man would take a trip to Europe for a holiday; but we seldom do. For complete rest we want to get away from ships, and sea, and everything salty."

"But it was not of myself I was thinking," he went on; "it was of you. What do you do with yourself after your boarders are gone?"

"I can hardly say, sir," Gil replied. "You see this is the first season we have taken boarders. Up to last year I always went to school, and last winter I worked awhile in Jason's store. But times are pretty bad, and it's hard to find anything to do."

"Must be very hard, in such a small place," Mr. Merrifield assented. "And a little village is hardly the place for a young man like you to make a start in. I suppose you have thought of that?"

"Often, sir!" Gil declared. And with this encouragement he gave Mr. Merrifield a brief account of the coffee plantation and his ideas concerning it.

"That is all very well," Mr. Merrifield answered, when Gil concluded. "Things may take such a turn that you will get your property back. But in the meantime you ought to be doing something for yourself — something better than taking boarders, if you

will excuse me for saying so. You have gone into this business like a man, and have done excellently with it; but it is not a calling that will enlarge your ideas or bring out what is in you. You ought to be seeing something, and learning something."

"I only wish I could, sir," Gil assented.

"That is what I wished to speak to you about," Mr. Merrifield continued. "I have become better acquainted with you this summer than you imagine, perhaps, for I have watched you with some interest. I like to see a young man who is not afraid of hard work, or disagreeable work, who can always be depended upon to do the honest thing, and who has grit. There are always openings for such boys. On our own line we have some such young fellows, all picked out with the greatest care. We take them on as cadets in the different departments, and let them work their way up. They have hard work, and dirty work, at first, and no great pay; but they have a chance to make almost anything of themselves that they like. They see a great deal of the world, being on the ships, and may rise to be chief engineers or assistants, or sometimes even to be commanders of the ships. We select them, as I said, with great care, for our cadets must have all the good qualities and none of the bad ones. How would you like to try such a place as that?"

"Why, Mr. Merrifield," Gil exclaimed, "I should like it better than anything else in the world!"

"Then you shall have a chance," the superintendent continued. "I can give you the necessary recommendation to the company, and I am sure you will do your best. But you must make up your mind to be patient, for openings come slowly. We do not take boys for a few weeks or months, you understand, but for permanent places, and it may be months before there is a vacancy. But keep yourself in readiness, and sooner or later you shall hear from me."

"I don't know how I can ever thank you, Mr. Merrifield," Gil began. "I —"

"Oh, never mind that," the superintendent interrupted. "Our company needs the right sort of young men as much as the young men need the places. We have had a very pleasant time with you this summer, and I hope my family will be able to occupy the same rooms next year; though probably I shall not be here, and perhaps you may not be either."

It seemed almost like the breaking up of a family when the chilly fall days came and the Merrifields packed their trunks and returned to New York. There had been hardly an unpleasant incident in the whole season, and the Standish family were as much pleased with their boarders as the Merrifields were with the way in which they had been treated.

"Remember that you are to hear from me," Mr. Merrifield said as he stepped into the car, to Gil who stood upon the station platform to see them off. "It

may be in a week, or it may not be for months; but you will certainly hear."

"Be sure that I will be ready, sir," Gil answered, "whenever the word comes;" and from that small basis the Cairo gossips soon had a story afloat that Gil was to become a clerk in Mr. Merrifield's office, at a salary something like the income of a Vanderbilt.

Gil could speak then with more certainty about being ready when the summons came, for he had talked the matter over with his mother and the rest of the family, and knew at least that there would be no positive objection to his going. For this much he was largely indebted to Rose, who stood his steadfast friend throughout.

"Well," she said, when Gil's mother at first declared that she could not think of letting him go away, "if I had a son I should think a long time before I condemned him to stay in a little country village and keep boarders, when he had such a chance to make something of himself."

There were many long arguments about it, in the course of which Gil talked Mrs. William J. over to his side, and with all three against her Mrs. Standish was compelled in the end to give at least a tacit consent.

Already the mountain tops were covered with snow. Blackhead and Round Top and Finney's Peak were white, and the long Cairo winter was rapidly approaching. The Standish household went back to its old ruts.

Mrs. George W. became once more the sole occupant of the big room over the kitchen; Mrs. William J. and Rose went back to the front room, and Gil moved down from the attic to his old quarters over the sitting room.

The savings from the summer's business were not quite enough to carry them through the long winter, even in their frugal way of living when alone, but various small sums came in unexpectedly from several sources. The man who owed interest on a mortgage on the farm was able to make a payment, because Cairo had done well even if times were dull elsewhere; and Mrs. William J., who had a little property of her own, received some money that she had hardly looked for. So on the whole they felt able to keep afloat till the next year's boarders came.

Meanwhile Gil, though he had much less to do, had many things to think of. Almost any day his summons might come, and he must be ready for it. If he went on the American Line, he should run to Southampton, probably; and he read all the books he could buy or borrow about Southampton and the Isle of Wight, and England in general, and about ocean liners and famous voyages. He felt himself something of a sailor already, though he had never seen the sea. And such an eye as he kept upon the post-office! "Your box will never get away for want of being watched, Gil," the postmaster told him. But it began after a while to look like a useless vigil. All through the fall he

watched every mail, thinking that Mr. Merrifield would at least send him word of some sort; and through November and December, past the Christmas times, and into the new year — the year of our Lord 1897. But to tell the truth the expected letter never came at all.

Another thing to think of was the coffee plantation, for more and more news continued to come from Cuba, which was worse and worse or better and better, according as you looked at it. They had the news regularly now, for with the advent of boarders they had subscribed for a New York daily newspaper, which arrived every morning at a quarter past eleven.

"Do you see how much worse the rebellion is growing in Cuba?" Rose said to him one day. She never let a day pass without reading the news, especially the Cuban news.

"Oh, don't I though!" Gil responded. "Something's going to happen down there pretty soon, and whatever it is it will be good for us. The Spaniards are getting mad at us because so many expeditions start out from Florida. They'd better keep their temper, if they know when they're well off. If they ruffle the eagle's feathers, the old bird may let fly his claws. Suppose they should get into a row with us! We'd soon have a coffee plantation then."

"Huh!" Rose exclaimed; "we'd take Havana in a week, if it came to that."

"A week!" Gil cried; "we'd take it in ten minutes. What could those old forts down there do against one of our modern warships? But I guess they won't be so foolish. If this country once tells them to get out, I think they'll get. Anyhow, we can only possess our souls in patience, as the dominie says, and see what happens."

Still Gil watched the mails, and still no letter came. Time and again his mother told him that Mr. Merrifield had forgotten all about him, and that he had better give up hoping; but Gil was not of the giving-up kind. The message had been promised him, and he knew it was coming. It was wearisome waiting and grew more wearisome every day, till one morning he answered a ring at the bell and found the telegraph operator standing on the porch.

"Got a message for you, Gil," he said, holding out his little black book with the message inside.

Gil had never received a telegram before in his life, but he tried to take it as coolly as possible.

"Anything to pay?" he asked.

"No, all paid," the operator replied. "Just sign the book."

Gil signed the receipt in the proper line and took the message, and the operator was off through the snow.

To run a finger under the fold of a telegraph envelope and give it a tear is a convenient method when you are in a hurry, and Gil took out and read the brief

message that had considerable to do with his life and consequently with this history of his adventures: —

"NEW YORK, January 14.

"GILBERT STANDISH, CAIRO, N. Y.

"Vacant cadetship on the *St. Louis*. Come down at once.

"H. G. MERRIFIELD."

CHAPTER V.

CADET ENGINEER STANDISH.

FOR a boy who had been ready for months for a summons, Gil found a great many questions to be decided offhand. Should he take a trunk? If he succeeded in getting the vacant place and he had not much doubt about that, it would be folly for him to come back; so he would need plenty of clothes along. But there might be no place aboard ship for him to store a trunk; and he concluded to take the big satchel and the little one. And the mere getting to New York was something of an undertaking, in the middle of winter.

It could not quite be said of Gil that he had never been in a railway train, for he had been several times over the little railroad from Cairo to Catskill. But that road was built entirely for carrying summer visitors into the Catskills, and no trains run over it in winter. There was no river boat from Catskill, either, the river being covered with thick ice. There was nothing for it but the early stage to Catskill, a trip across the river, and then the cars to the great city that was as full of won-

ders for him as any magic city of the "Arabian Nights," because he had never seen it.

With great skill for so inexperienced a traveller he looked up the time-tables and laid his plans. To get to Catskill that day was quite out of the question; but he went over to Walters's Hotel and left an order on the slate for the early stage to call for him next morning. That would be at 7.30, and it would get him to Catskill by 9.30, or before; then half an hour to get to "the Point," and another half for crossing the river, and he would easily catch the 10.45 train for New York. That would land him in the city before two o'clock, and he could certainly reach Mr. Merrifield's office before three.

"Oh, it's dreadful, Gil, to think of your going away from us," his mother said that evening as they sat around the sitting-room stove. "Maybe we won't see you again for months and months, and here we'll sit wondering where you are, and what you are doing. I shouldn't mind so much if you were not going in those awful ships."

"Yes, it *is* dreadful, Gil," Rose assented, with greater resignation in her voice than in her face; "but how much dreadfuller it would be if you *weren't* going."

"Well, I suppose it's always been so, mother," Gil said, trying to laugh. "If every young man was to stay at home for the sake of sitting by his mother in front of the stove, what a jolly old world it would be; but it wouldn't get along very fast. Some of our ancestors

must have had go enough in them to leave home, or we shouldn't be in this country at all."

It is no discredit to Gil to say that he slept as well as usual that night, after he once fell asleep; for those who go out to fight the battles have new things to think about; it is those left behind who do the worrying. And in the morning there was not much time for grief, for breakfast had to be eaten before daylight, and when the stage drew up, there was still a lamp burning in the dining room.

The stage was on runners, of course, and there were plenty of bells on the horses, and plenty of robes in the sleigh to keep the passengers warm; and the very last thing that Gil saw of home, just before they rounded the turn in the road, was his mother and Rose and Aunt Ellen, all standing on the cold porch, waving their handkerchiefs at him furiously. He waved his in reply, and the hill hid them from view, and he realized that his first and perhaps his most important journey was fairly begun.

In less than two hours the stage set him down at the Irving House, in Catskill, where he had to wait for the sleigh-omnibus to take him down to "the Point," about a mile from the heart of the town. Everything went on runners, for the whole country was white with snow, although a few days of thawing weather had made the streets and roads sloppy.

When Gil reached Catskill Point, he found that he

and the other passengers were to cross the Hudson River in a way that he had never heard of before. The river is broad there, nearly a mile across, and for many weeks the ferry boat had been able to make no trips on account of the ice. That same ice made a capital bridge, however, and for a long time horses and sleighs had been driven across it safely. But the few days of warm weather had softened the thick ice so that it showed signs of giving way, and indeed did give way in some places, so that it was no longer safe to drive horses across, and there was danger of even sleighs drawn by men breaking through. As it was absolutely necessary to reach the railway station in some way, a large boat was mounted on runners, with bars affixed to the sides for men to propel it by, three men to each side. If the ice gave way beneath it, the boat would not sink, and the men outside, if they held fast to the handles, could suffer nothing worse than an icy bath.

In this novel conveyance Gil went slowly but safely across the river, in company with a dozen other passengers, reaching the station nearly half an hour ahead of the train time. Finding already that his two satchels were becoming an encumbrance, he took them both to the baggage-room, after buying his ticket, and had them checked for New York, knowing that they could lie in the baggage-room in the city until he called for them.

"Now I'm in for it!" he said to himself when the train began to whirl him away from the scenes he had always been familiar with. "I've got to expect some hard knocks where I'm going, but I'll try to take them like a man. A fellow can't expect to stay at home to be petted by his mother all his life — at least he should not care to, and I'm sure I don't."

But with all his great thoughts of the future he could not help thinking a good deal about home and the dear ones left behind; and he was still wondering what his mother was doing, and Rose and Aunt Ellen, when the train ran into the Grand Central Station, and he got out and soon found himself in one of the greatest crowds he had ever seen. Even the county fair every fall in Cairo was not half as bad. And as he was carried along by the throng into Forty-second Street, a new question presented itself. The newspaper advertisments told him that the office of the American Line was at No. 6 Bowling Green, and that the ships lay at Piers 14 and 15, North River. Would Mr. Merrifield be at the office or at the piers? He had no idea how to find either place; but he thought it over for a minute, in spite of the crowd that roughly bore him along, and concluded that the Superintendent would most likely be at the piers with the ships.

"Will you tell how to get to Pier 14, North River?" he asked the big policeman who stood on the curb.

Before the officer could answer, a hack driver who

had overheard the question tried to take him in charge.

"It's a long ways from here, sir," said he, "and mighty hard to find. It's well onto four mile; but I'll drive you down there for two dollars."

"That's the easiest way," said the policeman, nodding his head toward the hackman, "if you've got money to burn. But if you want to go down there for five cents, you go straight ahead along Forty-second Street till you come to the elevated railroad in Sixth Avenue. You cross right under the elevated, mind you, to the other side of the Avenue, and take a train down to Cortlandt Street. Get out at Cortlandt, and turn to the right towards the river, two or three short blocks, and there you are at Pier 14. You can't miss it very well."

Gil followed these directions carefully, but not without wondering how the policeman knew him to be a stranger in the city; for it was evident from his manner that he did know it.

"Just wait a little," he said to himself, "and they shan't pick me out so easily for a countryman."

In less than half an hour he was on the river front at Cortlandt Street; and there, looming up in front of him, was a great building half a block long, with a big sign, "American S. S. Line," across the front. But what gave him a start and made the blood jump in his veins was the steamship that lay at a pier to

the south of the building, for across her stern in big gold letters he read her name, *St. Louis.*

No wonder that he stood and looked at the big ship almost with awe, for it was the first ocean steamer he had ever seen, and one of the finest of the Atlantic Liners. And if his expectations were realized, that great fabric of steel was to be his ocean home! He did not need to guess at her length or her age, for he had those things all by heart, having learned the family history of all the American Line ships.

"Built by the Cramps in Philadelphia in 1894," he said to himself, "so she's only three years old. Eleven thousand six hundred and twenty-nine gross tonnage. Twenty thousand horse-power in her engines. Five hundred and thirty-five feet long, sixty-three feet wide, and fifty feet deep. But I didn't realize what those figures mean till I saw her. Why, she'd reach from our house down to Jason's store, I should think."

But he did realize that he had business before him, and must not stand all day looking at the ship. He turned toward the big entrance to the pier, where he was promptly stopped by the man on guard.

"Well, sir?" said the man, standing in front of him.

"Will you tell me where I can find Superintendent Merrifield?" Gil asked.

"In the office, one flight up," the man answered. "Take the stairs to the left."

A moment later he was in a big room upstairs, sur-

rounded by a bewildering array of clerks and book-keepers in little pens with wire fronts, like cages.

"Well, sir?" said an office boy, who quickly stepped up to him. He began to think that the usual New York salutation.

"I want to see Superintendent Merrifield," Gil answered.

"Name, please," said the boy, holding a small pad and a pencil in front of him; and Gil wrote his name on the pad, and the boy disappeared in another room with it and in a moment came back to say, "Step this way, please."

At last he was at the end of his journey, in Mr. Merrifield's office; and there was Mr. Merrifield himself, looking over *such* piles of papers on his desk.

"Well, Standish, you're on time, as usual," the Superintendent said, looking up as Gil entered. "I was sure you would be here to-day, for you're always prompt. Indeed, I gave you one last trial in my telegram. When I said 'Come at once,' I meant business, for the *St. Louis* sails to-morrow, and if you had fooled away any time, you'd have had to wait for the next opening."

"I was only too glad to come, sir," Gil answered.

"Sit down, Gilbert," Mr. Merrifield went on, "and we'll do this business up in short order. When I was with you in Cairo I had plenty of time on my hands; but here I have a dozen things to do every minute, and

no time to waste. Your family are willing that you should go to sea, are they?"

"Yes, sir, quite willing," Gil replied.

"Very well, then," Mr. Merrifield continued. "This vacancy is in the engineer's department, and the pay at the start is twelve dollars a month. I have told you already about what the place is, so we need not go over that again. It is an excellent opening for a young man, and we have a great many applicants. If you are still in the mind to try it, I will send you aboard to see the chief engineer at once."

"I am very anxious to try it, sir," Gil answered.

Without more words Mr. Merrifield pressed an electric button, and took up a pad and wrote upon it with his pencil: —

"Chief Engineer Hawley, *St. Louis.*

"This is Gilbert Standish, the young man I have recommended to you. If you are suited with him, he will sail with you to-morrow. H. G. M."

"Take this young man aboard the *St. Louis*, to the chief engineer," he told the boy who answered the bell, handing him the slip from the pad. "And come back here to me, Gilbert, after you have seen the chief."

"Yes, sir; thank you," Gil replied, as the boy led the way out.

"So you're going to be a cadet on the *St. Louis*, are you?" the boy asked, as they went down the stairs,

after taking the liberty to read what was written upon the paper.

"I hope so," Gil answered, a little shortly. He was not used to the ways of office boys, and wondered that any boy should read a note that was given him to carry.

"Well, you're in luck," the boy went on. "That's a jolly good job for a young feller. I've been trying to get a cadetship myself, but I ain't fetched it yet. You must have a big pull."

Gil began to protest that he knew nothing about "pulls"; but before he could say much they reached the ship and the chief engineer's room; and the boy, handing the slip of paper to Mr. Hawley, returned to the office, and left Gil waiting to hear his fate.

"Oh, you are young Standish, are you?" the chief asked, as he read the note. "I expected you to-day, as Mr. Merrifield recommended you very highly and said he had telegraphed for you. How old are you, Standish?"

"A little past seventeen, sir," Gil answered.

"And you have about the ordinary common school education of a boy of your age, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; just about that."

"And you are ready to sail to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well," Mr. Hawley went on, "I will take you on the Superintendent's recommendation, without the careful inquiries we generally make. You

will be put on the refrigerating plant; and I will only caution you that we expect the most implicit obedience from all our cadets — from every one in the crew, in fact. You will be under the orders of Mr. Crane, the cadet in charge of that plant, who is not much older than yourself, but his orders are to be obeyed as carefully as the captain's. You will be particular always to address him as 'Mr. Crane.'"

"Yes, sir," Gil replied; and the chief pressed one of a long array of electric buttons on his desk, and in a moment the summons was answered by a brisk young man in blue uniform, with the Company's insignia on his cap.

"Here is the young man who is to take Brownley's place on your staff, Mr. Crane," the chief said. "His name is Standish, and he is very highly recommended by the Superintendent. You can take him to your quarters and get him trained in a little before we sail."

"Very well, sir," Mr. Crane answered, with what Gil thought a sort of military salute; "step this way, Standish."

Gil followed his new chief out of the room to the deck, and down companionways and through narrow passages, till he was completely lost, and at length into an apartment that seemed to him very small, but that in reality was much larger than the average. There were two berths on one side, one over the

other, and at one end a broad sofa built against the partition, and at the other end a narrow iron stairway led to some mysterious region below. What Gil noticed particularly about this stairway was the brass railing beside it, which shone like a mirror.

"Ever been to sea before?" Mr. Crane asked, when they reached this snug little den. "Know anything about ships?"

"No, sir, I never was on a ship before," Gil answered.

"Just as well," said Mr. Crane, seating himself on the sofa and keeping Gil standing before him while he "sized him up"; "you'll have nothing to unlearn. But you'll have a heap to learn, young man, and the first thing is to learn to obey orders. We couldn't run a ship like this unless every man obeyed orders. This sofa here will be your bunk. There are three of us on the plant, and the last man always takes the sofa. Your trunk or whatever you've got goes under the bunk, and those two hooks to the right belong to you to hang clothes on.

"You know what a refrigerating plant is, I suppose?" he went on. "We carry provisions enough for an army on the ship, and most of them have to be kept cool. Our plant keeps them cool, and our business is to keep the refrigerator engine running. We have nothing to do with running the ship, but ours is a very important part, for all that. We stand watch and watch, four hours on and eight off. When you're

on watch, your duty is to keep the machinery oiled and clean, and see that everything runs smooth; and when there's any trouble, to shut off steam and call me. And, being the last man, you have all the brasses to polish every day, — but that comes out of your off-watch time, — and don't forget that the chief inspects the quarters every morning, and you might better be dead than let him find any dirt on the brasses. I'll put you on the first watch to-night, from 8 to 12, so I can be with you part of the time; and till then you can look about and get your kit aboard."

"Very well, sir," Gil answered, using the same form of reply that his young chief had used.

"But wait!" Mr. Crane exclaimed. "I must give you your ship number and your fire station. Let me see —" (and he took a little note-book from his pocket and consulted it), "every man on the ship has his number, and yours is 428; put that down somewhere so you'll not forget it. And your fire station is No. 6. You can find boat No. 6 for yourself when you go on deck. When you hear the fire alarm you're to drop everything (first shutting off steam, of course, if you happen to be on watch), and get to your station as fast as you can and wait for orders. Now do you understand everything I've told you?"

"I think I understand the main points, sir," Gil answered; "but I'll soon get the hang of it, I hope."

"Very well. Now get your dunnage aboard, for you'll be busy to-night." And so saying, the young chief went down the iron stairway, leaving Gil to his own resources.

It was not as difficult to find his way through the passages and out to the main deck as he imagined it would be, and the latest recruit of the American Line took the opportunity to look about the ship and learn what he could. As no visitors were allowed on board the day before sailing, he was not interfered with, and could go pretty much where he chose. Naturally, he was dazzled by the splendid passenger accommodations; and the division of space into rooms like those of a house, only far finer than any house he had ever seen, surprised him; but there was no one for him to talk to, for everybody he saw was busy. Suddenly it occurred to him that he must find boat No. 6, to learn his place in case of fire, and he set out to hunt for it.

There were many boats on the davits, but by following the gradually decreasing numbers he soon came to No. 6, and stood wondering what his part would be if there should be a fire, when he heard a sharp voice calling:—

"Hey, boy; come here!"

Looking around, he saw a young fellow of about his own age, in soiled blue overalls and with his sleeves rolled up, looking out of a neighboring doorway.

"Come here!" the young man repeated, as he caught Gil's eye; and Gil stepped up to him.

"Are you the new boy on the refrigerating plant?" he asked, looking Gil over from head to foot, but without taking his hands out of his pockets.

"Yes, I am to be to-night," Gil answered.

"Yes what?" the young fellow snapped. "Do you know who you're talking to? I'm Mr. Clark, the first assistant on that plant, and when you speak to me you call me Mister, and when you answer you say sir. Do you understand that, youngster?"

"Yes, sir," Gil answered, trying hard to keep from smiling and succeeding very well.

"Well, see you remember it," Mr. Clark continued. "Mr. Crane forgot to tell you to be at the engineers' mess at one bell in the second dog-watch for supper. Don't forget that either, or you'll get no supper. But you're a hayseed, I suppose, and don't know a dog-watch from a watch-dog. That means 6.30; and see you're prompt."

With this parting injunction the important young man disappeared, and left Gil wondering whether the first assistant on the refrigerating plant was of more consequence aboard ship than the chief engineer, and whether such a companion would be altogether pleasant on a long voyage.

But too much was happening that day for him to wonder long at anything. In the morning he had

never in his life been out of sight of old Blackhead. In the afternoon he was a cadet on the *St. Louis*, with the great unknown city close beside him; and next morning he was to sail for Europe in one of the finest and largest and fastest steamers afloat.

Time went on, however, as quietly and rapidly as if there had been no change in his condition, and with almost every moment there was something new to occupy his attention. The last brief interview with Mr. Merrifield, in which the Superintendent explained to him how to give his checks to an expressman and have his baggage brought down at once from the Grand Central Station; the first supper in the mess room, which was good and abundant, but somewhat marred by young Clark's domineering ways; the first duty on watch in the little engine room, in which Mr. Crane visited him frequently and kept him busy scouring more brass work than he had any idea a single ship could carry; and at length the relief at eight bells, meaning midnight, when Mr. Clark went on watch again, and when Gil could have turned in, if he had chosen, in the comfortable bed that one of the engineer's stewards had made up for him on the sofa. But he still had one more duty to perform; for how could he sail for England next morning without sending a letter home?

There was still a light burning in the mess room, and with a pencil and a pad on the table he wrote much

more than he intended to "Dear Mother, Aunt Ellen, Rose, & Co."

"Everything has turned out properly," he wrote, "and I am a cadet engineer on the *St. Louis*, at twelve dollars a month, 'with a chance for advancement,' as the boys say who advertise for situations." Then he told of his journey down, and his kind reception by Mr. Merrifield, and continued: "One thing that I had not thought of before, but that I see plainly enough now, is that I shall have an entirely new set of friends for a while. No more mother and aunty and cousin to make me change my wet shoes. No more, for a while, of the good old Cairo boys. I don't know yet, of course, who the new ones are to be. Mr. Crane, my chief boss, I think I shall like. Mr. Clark, my second boss, I am not quite sure about yet. He is very 'bossy,' but he can't hurt a fellow who is determined to obey orders at all hazards. It's funny he should be so important, too, for he was only the boy in our department till this last voyage, just as I am now.

"I can't tell you to-night about the ship — indeed, I don't see how anybody could describe her. She is like twenty great houses in one, with half as many people on her as there are in Cairo. I can't understand how the highest seas could make her rock, but they say they do.

"In three weeks, I believe, we are to be back, and

then you shall at least have another letter from, if you do not see in person,

"Your affectionate son and nephew and cousin,

"GILBERT STANDISH,
"*Cadet Engineer S.S.* St. Louis."

CHAPTER VI.

WAR CLOUDS GATHER.

THE new cadet took his initiation into a sailor's life "all in one dose," as he expressed it himself. He had no knowledge, at the beginning, that the North Atlantic was much more boisterous in winter than in summer; but he learned something about that before he had been a cadet for many hours; and learned so many other things, too, that he could not help realizing that he had begun a new life in a new world — a world composed largely of water, as far as he could see.

The way the *St. Louis* started on a voyage was one of his first surprises. He expected a great crowd of passengers, and a greater crowd on the pier to see them off; and he was fully prepared to see the *St. Louis* start off with a bound, like a hunting dog suddenly unchained. But everything was different. There were few passengers, as people do not cross the ocean in winter for pleasure, and still fewer people were out in the cold to see them off; and as for the start, there was not as much fuss about it as the Catskill ferry-boat makes in starting to cross the river, and he would not

have known they were under way if he had not seen the big pier shed moving slowly backward.

"Get all the air you can, youngster; you'll not see much of the deck when we're out of the bay."

Gil was standing just outside the companion door, enjoying his first sight of the upper bay and the cities that surround it. He was off duty for the time, Mr. Crane himself being on watch, and it was his messmate Clark who spoke — "Mister" Clark, as he insisted upon being called, though there was a little change for the better in his manner, for he saw that Gil had no intention of putting himself on an equality with so old and experienced an officer.

"Why, don't they allow us on deck when we're at sea?" Gil asked.

"They allow it fast enough," Clark answered, "but you won't want much of it. Do you think one of these fast liners is like an old freighter? We don't rise to the waves like a lighter ship, but cut right through 'em. When we're at full speed in heavy weather the decks are flooded. They say a ship that's near enough sees nothing of us at such a time but the tops of our funnels; everything else's just water and foam."

It was quite a condescension for Mr. Clark to say so much to the boy of his department, but he could not quite resist the temptation to air his superior knowledge, and Gil was glad to have the information even on such terms. The young man pointed out some of the inter-

esting places on shore, such as Governor's Island and Fort Lafayette and Staten Island and then Coney Island, and Gil looked at them all, but some of them he hardly saw, for he was thinking of other things. He could not help feeling a curious sensation around the heart as he saw the land disappearing, and the ship tearing through the water, and knew that every moment was taking him further away from the home and the dear ones he had never left before. He might have thought too much about these things for his own comfort if the ship's bow had not suddenly made a great dive toward the bottom of the sea, when they were well out past Sandy Hook.

"Look out!" Clark shouted; he had had experience in such matters, and knew what was to follow. But instead of looking out he looked in, and not only looked but went in, through the open door, and dragged Gil after him. He quickly closed the door, and about two seconds afterward they heard the crash of a hundred tons of water breaking upon the deck and the deck-houses.

"Now we're going to get it!" Clark laughed; "there's been a nasty easterly wind for three or four days, and we're going right into the face of a dandy sea. You begin to look pale already, youngster, but you mustn't give in to it. Never been seasick, eh? Well, you'll know soon enough what it is. You're all blue about the mouth, but you must stick it out and keep on your feet. Everybody'll laugh at you if you give in."

This was particularly exasperating to Gil, for he had not thought of such a thing as being sick; but he had made up his mind that he should have a heap of unpleasant things to stand from Clark, so he only laughed about it.

It was a triumph for him, though he had to enjoy it all by himself, that he was not sick a single minute in the whole voyage. There were two or three times when, as the stern went down viciously, he felt as if the top of his head were coming off; but that was the worst, and he soon outgrew it.

By the time they were off the Banks of Newfoundland, in two days and a half, the new cadet had settled well down to his work. The same things came with great regularity every day; on watch, off watch, scouring, oiling, keeping an eye on the machinery; eating, sleeping, and coming off watch dirty and oily. But what mattered the dirty oil, when they had their own little bath-room adjoining their room, where they could wash to their heart's content?

It did not take Mr. Crane long to see that his new boy put brain as well as muscle into his work. Any boy can scour brass handles and ornaments, but not every boy takes as much interest in the work as Gil did. He was determined to understand the business; and before he had been many days on the ship he made the acquaintance of young Mr. Hanway, the fourth assistant engineer, and borrowed a standard work from him

on "Modern Marine Engines," which he studied whenever he had a chance. And Mr. Crane saw that, too, and loaned him other books on the same subject, and took pains to teach him. And one day, on the voyage over, Mr. Hanway took him down into the great engine room when they were both off duty, and showed him the wonderful machinery that kept the ship in motion. That day they had a conversation, too, that gave Gil new things to think about.

"I like to see a youngster take an interest in his work," Mr. Hanway said, "and you seem to like it. If you're as bright as I think you are, you'll lose no opportunity to learn, for the chances were never as good as now for promotion for everybody, to my way of thinking."

"Why now more than at any other time, sir?" Gil asked.

"Can't you see through a ladder?" Mr. Hanway answered, with a laugh. "Don't you sniff blood in the air? The Spaniards are getting mad at us because the Cubans get so much help from this country; and the Americans are getting mad over the way the Cubans are abused. Both countries are growing hotter every day. If we don't have a little scrap with Spain before many months, I'm very much mistaken."

Gil was surprised to find that other people held his own notions about possible trouble with Spain; but still he did not quite catch Mr. Hanway's meaning.

"What has that to do with our promotion, sir?" he asked.

"Everything," the engineer answered, "because the *St. Louis* is an auxiliary cruiser. Do you know what that means? Like some more fine steamers, she is built after plans approved by the government, so that in case of war the government can take her and use her for a warship. And in return for this her owners get certain payments and privileges. So if we have a war, the ship is sure to go into the navy, and her crew with her; and as some of the men won't care to go, for various reasons, promotions will come with a jump. That's why I say this is a good time to learn, youngster."

"But she is not covered with armor, like a warship, Mr. Hanway," Gil objected.

"No, she hasn't the sides, that's true, but she has the heels," Mr. Hanway laughed. "She couldn't fight a Spanish man-of-war, but she could run away from her, and sometimes that's more important than fighting. I suppose the *St. Louis* could show her stern to any warship in the world; and that makes her so valuable that if there is a fight we are sure to be in it."

This set Gil to thinking very hard. So other people held his opinion, did they, that there was danger of a war with Spain? He had not heard any one speak so plainly about it before. The more he thought about it, the more certain he felt that he did not want to see

the country plunged into war if it could be helped. How many brave young men would lose their lives, how many millions be spent, if we should have a war! But he felt, too, that if there *should* be a war, if we should be forced into one for the sake of humanity, or for the safety or dignity of the nation, he must have a hand in it.

Better than all, as he regarded it, his own little affairs seemed to go completely into the background whenever he thought of the chances of war. To be sure, trouble with Spain would be almost certain to restore to him and his family the property of which they had been deprived. But what was that compared with the honor of the beloved country and flag? It was not for a coffee plantation that he wanted to fight, but for his country. And when they reached Southampton and he saw only two or three American flags among so many flags of all nations, the dear old stars and stripes were dearer to him than ever.

"So all the men on the ship won't want to go, won't they, if we are taken into the navy," he said to himself. "Well, I don't want to be one of the shirkers, and I must try and get that matter settled at home. I won't go without mother's consent, of course; but I don't think she's the mother to hold me back if my country needs me. To be sure, the chances are ten to one against our having any war; but if there is one, I want to be prepared."

It was a disappointment to him to find that he would have no shore leave at Southampton. The Isle of Wight and all that he could see of the mainland looked remarkably green and pleasant for the time of year, but the best he could get was an hour's leave to have a hurried look at the city, just enough to warrant his saying that he had been in England; for the refrigerating engine must be in motion whether the ship was at sea or in port, and there was no rest for its crew.

There was always time to write when he was off watch, however, and on his first evening in Southampton he went into the mess room and wrote a long letter home.

"If we were going right back," he wrote, "it would be folly for me to send you a letter from here, for when the *St. Louis* once starts there's nothing afloat can beat her across the Atlantic. But we are to be here about four days; and one of the German steamers bound for New York touches here to-morrow, so I suppose you will get this when we are about the middle of the ocean.

"You will want to know how I am and what I am doing, and I can tell you that in short order. I never felt better in my life, and take three big meals a day with great regularity. And I am a great deal browner than when you saw me last, though how much of it comes from the sea air and how much from dirty oil ground into my skin I can hardly say.

"Well, I am the 'boy' of the refrigerating plant; that is, the last fellow to come on, and have most of the cleaning and scouring to do, and two 'bosses' to see that I do it right. One of the bosses is Mr. Crane, the chief of this department, a good fellow who teaches me a great deal about the work and is always pleasant. The other is a young man named Clark, who is rather funny, than otherwise. I suppose a good many fellows in my place would get mad at him, but I haven't yet, and don't intend to, for I made up my mind when I came here just to stand whatever came and attend to my business. Mr. Clark doesn't teach me anything, but I can't blame him very much for that, because I don't think he could. He is very 'bossy,' but what difference does that make? I suppose he is paying me off for the way he was bossed himself, when he was the boy. I will give you a little illustration of his style — not because I mind it any, but simply to introduce him to you.

"One day Mr. Crane relieved me on watch just before mess time, and I hurried up to our bath-room to wash for supper — for we get very black and oily in the engine room. I suppose I was in too much of a hurry and didn't get all the grime off, for just as I went into the stateroom, Mr. Clark came in and pretended to be shocked at my appearance.

"'Why don't you keep yourself clean, Standish? You're perfectly filthy. Go and wash yourself, and be quick about it.'

"Just imagine a fellow of my age being ordered to go and wash, and by a chap hardly as old as himself! But what do you think I did? Why, *I just went and washed myself over again.* He'll soon get tired of that business when he finds that I obey every order he gives me.

"But there are pleasanter things to write about. I must have you all on board some day to see our cosey quarters, for we are as snug as Robinson Crusoe in his cave. It's wonderful how there can be so many sets of men in so small a space without their seeing more of each other. There are all the passengers, to begin with, that we don't see at all at this time of year, except sometimes a stray one on deck. And all the engineers, and all the stokers, and all the crew! Nearly five hundred people on board, but still we are all to ourselves when we want to be.

"There's a great lot of brass work in our little department, and I have to keep it all bright. But never mind; some day I'll be promoted a step, and then the next boy will have it to do. I have learned a heap about the engines in a week, and Mr. Hanway, the fourth engineer, lends me mechanical books. I need hardly tell you that having gone into the business, I want to learn it thoroughly. If I ever become a coffee-planter (!) there may be engines on the estate, and then my knowledge will come in handy.

"Now I have left my most important subject for

the last, as they say girls always do in a letter. I must tell you to begin with that the *St. Louis* is what they call an auxiliary cruiser. That is, she is built after a certain style, with great speed, and in case of war she is liable to be taken by the government and put into the navy. And some of the men seem to think, as I do, that we are in danger of having a war with Spain. Mr. Hanway, the fourth engineer, says that in such a case some of the men would not go, so it would be a great time for promotions.

"Now, mother, and all of you, I hope there won't be any war; but if there *is* one, I don't want to be one of the men to back out. I want to stand by the ship and serve my country; and I speak of it in good time so that I can be one of the first on board to say so.

"You must not think that I feel so merely because I want to serve our own interests or to be promoted. I used to talk about fighting the Spaniards so that we could get our plantation back; but I was only a boy then. I never knew till I got into a foreign land how much I love our own dear country; and if she should ever be in need of defenders, I *could not* stay at home. It would be impossible. What our grandfathers and fathers fought for we must fight for too if necessary, and I am sure you would not prevent me.

"Of course I would not go without your consent. But if the time should come, I want to write 'Gil Standish' on the list as soon as they ask who will go. So

think of it, please; and be sure to send me a letter while we are in New York, for it is very doubtful whether I can get home this trip.

"That is the important part of my letter. Do not overlook it, please, when you answer, for not a day passes without my thinking about it. I am all right in every respect, and like my new business, and intend to push myself ahead in it if it is possible. With much love to you all,

"Your affectionate son and nephew and cousin,

"GILBERT STANDISH,

"*Cadet Engineer S.S.* St. Louis."

CHAPTER VII.

ENLISTED IN THE NAVY.

"A STEAMER, at her highest speed, which is ten knots, consumes one ton of coal an hour, and when eight hundred knots from the port to which she is bound finds she has only forty-five tons of fuel remaining; at what rate must she proceed to enable her to reach the port without the aid of sails?"

By the time he had been a cadet on the *St. Louis* for a year, Gil was spending his spare time solving little problems like that, which would be puzzling enough for most of us, but had become easy to him. Only a year! twelve months, fifty-two weeks — or twenty-one round trips across the ocean, as he figured it himself.

We can see by the way he handles that problem, which was given him by the chief engineer (who has become his friend and occasional instructor), whether the young cadet has been wasting his time or not. To be sure, it is not an exceptionally hard one; but if you think it a question for the infant class, just try a hand at it yourself, without the aid of Gil's figures.

He has a little blank book in his hand as he sits on the sofa, and we may take the liberty to look over his shoulder and see what he is doing.

"At the consumption of one ton an hour," he has written, "the quantity at ten knots would be eighty tons; so, if x be the rate at which she must steam, we have

$$45 : 80 :: x^2 \times 800 : 10^2 \times 800 :: x^2 : 10^2;$$

$$\therefore\ 80x^2 = 45 \times 10^2.$$

$$x^2 = \frac{45 \times 100}{80}$$

$$= \tfrac{5}{4} \times 45$$

$$= \tfrac{225}{4}$$

$$= 56.25;$$

$$\therefore\ x = \sqrt{56.25}$$

$$= 7.5 \text{ knots.}$$

The chief could say nothing but that it was well done, for a young engineer fresh out of the naval academy could not have done it better.

But Gil's advancement in mathematics was only one of the events of the year. Once, only once, he had got long enough leave to venture a hurried trip to Cairo, and that was in midsummer, when he found Mr. Merrifield's family occupying the three rooms as before, but without the Superintendent, who went up only on Saturdays to spend Sunday; and that time

Gil had a royal welcome, you may be sure. And young Clark had been taken from the refrigerating plant and made an oiler in the great engine room, which he could regard as a promotion or not, as he chose, as his pay remained the same. So Gil was first assistant in the refrigerating crew, with only Mr. Crane over him, and with his salary increased to eighteen dollars a month, and with Jack Knowles, the new boy, under him.

There was no more scouring of brasses then, for Mr. Gil; no more sweeping of the engine room, or being ordered about by young Clark. He knew the refrigerating engine from top to bottom, from fly-wheel to the smallest bolt, and was quite competent to take charge of it without any one to watch him; and Mr. Crane was well pleased to have it so, for it secured him many a good night's sleep.

Such was Gil's status on board when the *St. Louis* sailed from Southampton on Saturday, February 12, 1898, on the trip that was to be his forty-fourth voyage across the Atlantic. He was well satisfied with the progress he had made, with the reports from home, and with the occupation that seemed to be his fate; and as for war, there had been times in the year when it looked like a probability, but the battle clouds had latterly been drifting away. The Spaniards were at least holding their own in Cuba, and seemed less disposed to seek a quarrel with the United States.

After the usual rough winter voyage the *St. Louis* sighted the Fire Island light a little before daybreak on Saturday, the 19th of February; and when she steamed past Sandy Hook, at about eight o'clock, Gil was just beginning his forenoon watch down in the engine room. Running into New York harbor was an old story with him now, and going below was no hardship. On account of a heavy winter fog no pilot had yet answered the ship's signals; but the revenue cutter was on hand in the lower bay with the custom-house officers, and they climbed aboard when the *St. Louis* stopped her engines to wait for the pilot.

From his place below Gil could not see that the cutter's flag was at half-mast, nor that the stolid revenue officers looked unusually solemn as they stepped aboard. And well they might, for it lay with them to tell the sad news that four days before had startled and shocked the whole world, but that was still unknown on board the liner.

Such news travels fast aboard ship. In five minutes the whole saloon was talking about it, the whole engine room, the whole crew. Gil got his first inkling of it by a call down the iron stairs from Mr. Crane.

"Hello, there, Standish!" his chief called.

"Aye, aye, sir," Gil promptly answered.

"The *Maine's* been blown up!" the voice continued.

It came so suddenly that he did not grasp it at first.

"What *Maine*, sir?" Gil asked.

"The United States Battleship *Maine*," Mr. Crane answered. "Blown up by the Spaniards with a mine in Havana harbor, and 266 of her crew killed."

"W-h-a-t!" Gil shouted, forgetting for once to say "sir" to his superior.

"And there's a Spanish man-of-war in New York harbor!" Mr. Crane added.

"Has war been declared?" Gil asked.

"Not yet," said Mr. Crane, "but it will be. They say the whole country is wild over it."

With this he was gone, perhaps to hear further news, and for the first time Gil felt it a hardship to be confined to the engine room.

There were so many things for him to think of; but foremost of all was the feeling of indignation that such an outrage should be perpetrated upon his country. And you will be shocked, I am afraid, to hear that the next was a burning thirst for revenge. It was very wrong, of course; but good fellow as he was, Gil had not yet reached a state of absolute perfection. There was enough love of justice in his heart, however, to lead him to ask himself, when he had had time to think, "How do they know the Spaniards blew her up? The Cubans might have done it to make trouble; or perhaps a boiler exploded." But in the absence of particulars he could only wonder and feel indignant.

Soon after they were under way again, with the pilot on board. Jack Knowles, the new boy, went down and

offered to relieve him for a few minutes so that he could go on deck and see the Spanish warship.

They ran within a few hundred feet of her, and Gil saw that she was called the *Vizcaya*, and that she looked very formidable and dangerous. But what surprised him most was the fleet of small boats that surrounded her — revenue cutters, police boats, and tugs.

"That's for her protection," Mr. Crane explained. "Our government won't take any chances of some hot-headed American blowing her up in New York harbor out of revenge. The Spaniards may like that sort of work, but we don't."

Though the *St. Louis* soon reached her pier, Gil was still on watch and could not leave his engine till twelve o'clock, and each of those hours seemed like a day to him. He began gradually to think of his own affairs, and to wonder what was in store for him. Unless the Spaniards made proper amends such an indignity must be resented, and there would be a war. And if there was a war, he would be in it, and Cuba would be freed, and some people he knew would come into their own. But everything seemed uncertain.

When noon at last came, and Mr. Crane relieved him on watch, Gil went up to the stateroom, and after washing drew out his big satchel from under the berth and took out a package of letters. Two of them were marked with a cross in lead pencil, and these he drew from the package. They bore the signs of age and

wear, for they were many months old, and he had carried them in his pocket a long time and read them frequently. They were answers to the letters he had written home on the night of his first arrival in Southampton. He took out the smaller one and read: —

"DEAR GIL: Your letter came this afternoon, and your mother is going to answer it to-morrow morning; but I shall be a little ahead of her by writing this evening.

"You did exactly right to be in good time and say that if we have a war you want to go. Your mother will certainly give her consent, for I shall keep urging her till she does. If there is a war, I intend to go myself, as far as a girl can, by making what poor things I can for the soldiers. Of course I am too young to know what war is, but I am old enough to know what love of country is.

"You know I love you as if you were my own brother; but if the country needed you and you did not go, I should be ashamed to look at you. But that could never be. I am sure your mother will give her consent.

"Your loving cousin,

"ROSE."

The other, from his mother, was on larger paper and in a larger envelope, but there were only a few lines of writing.

"My dearest Boy: What you wrote has given me a great deal of anxiety, though I comfort myself with thinking that our merciful Father will save us from the horrors of war.

"After seeking wisdom from the Only Wise, I have been given strength to tell you this: That if we should have a war with Spain, I do not want you to go into it on account of any private wrongs the Spanish have done us, for that would be an ignoble cause. Nor would I have you go into it for the sake of promotion, nor because your companions went.

"But if our dear country should need you, I could not justify myself in holding you back, even though you are my only son and I a widow. After God our first duty is to our country, and we must all do it. I can only pray that we may not be put to this great trial. I will send you a longer letter before you sail.

"Mother."

That letter Gil considered one of his most sacred possessions; quite on a par with the Magna Charta or the Declaration of Independence. He knew that the paper must have been wet with his mother's tears, and that it must have cost her a terrible struggle to write it. But it was a plain permission for him to go with his ship if she went to war, and it filled him with joy.

Of course there were letters for him in New York.

for his mother and Rose never failed to write; letters that confirmed the ones he had just been reading, and were full of sympathy for the murdered crew of the *Maine*. But those letters go with the rest of the indistinct happenings of the next two months. To this day Gil can hardly sort them out, they came so rapidly and in the midst of so much excitement. He remembers perfectly well that the Naval Court of Inquiry had been appointed two days before the *St. Louis* reached New York, and that on the following Monday it began its work, to fix the responsibility for the explosion. And he has a distinct recollection of going ashore at Southampton on the tenth of March, the ship having been delayed that trip, and meeting Tom Lewis on the pier. Tom was a young Englishman whose acquaintance he had made.

"Hello, Standish!" Tom shouted; "hooray for you fellows! I take off my hat to Americans this morning."

"Why, what's up?" Gil asked; "you know we haven't heard any news for a week."

"What, don't you know?" Tom cried; "oh, it's great news for you. A bill was introduced in your Congress last Monday appropriating fifty million dollars for the national defence — in other words, for licking Spain. It went through the House of Representatives on Tuesday by a unanimous vote — not a single vote against it. On Wednesday it went through the Senate the same way, and the President signed it at once. That's

the way I like to see a country do business; put up or shut up, and no blooming nonsense about it. You know what that means, I s'pose?"

"It means war, of course," Gil answered, "unless the Spaniards back out; and the poor Cubans will be freed."

"Oh, don't give me any Cuban stuff!" Tom laughed. "It's not the Cubans you fellows are going to war about; you're going to thrash Spain because she blew up your ship. And you're right, too, and you may be sure the English people are your friends. I don't know what the government may do, but the people are with you. Shake, old man. You'll go, of course?"

"Certainly," Gil replied. "The *St. Louis* is an auxiliary cruiser, and I suppose she will be ordered out very soon. I think I'll go back on board, Tom, and tell the news."

He half suspected that the ship might have found cable orders to return at once, but there was no news yet of any such orders; and they were back in New York in time to read that the *Oregon* had sailed from San Francisco to join the Atlantic Squadron.

By that time things were happening so fast that Gil began to make memoranda in his little account book. There was no longer any doubt about war, and he wanted a record of the way it commenced.

"March 28," he wrote, "*Maine* inquiry report sent to Congress.

"April 5, Consul-General Lee recalled from Havana.

"April 10, Consul-General Lee left Havana.

"April 11, President asked authority to intervene in Cuba.

"April 19, Intervention resolutions passed.

"April 20, Ultimatum sent to Spain.

"April 21, Spain gave Minister Woodford his passports.

"April 22, Proclamation of Cuban blockade. The *Nashville* captured the first prize.

"April 23, The President called for 125,000 volunteers.

"April 24, The —"

That entry for April 24 was left unfinished, and remains so to this day, for something important happened while he was writing it. Gil keeps it just as he left it, to mark an important point in his life.

They were lying at their pier in New York, and exciting rumors had been afloat for twenty-four hours. It was known that Mr. Merrifield was away from his office, something that seldom happened; and the story spread through the ship that he and the president of the company had been telegraphed for by the Secretary of the Navy. Nobody on board knew positively whether this was true, but it seemed very likely.

Late in the afternoon Gil sat in the stateroom, beginning to make an entry in his book, with Mr. Crane sitting on the sofa, looking over some papers, and Jack

Knowles below on watch, when the door opened without warning, and Ben Hanway, the fourth engineer, stepped in with an evening newspaper in his hand, and a look in his face that Gil knew had a meaning.

"Here we are, fellows," Hanway exclaimed; "here's what we've been looking for. Listen to this;" and he held up the paper and read:—

"Washington, April 24. — The four fast ships of the American Line, the *New York*, *Paris*, *St. Louis*, and *St. Paul*, were chartered by the Navy Department to-day, for the Spanish war. They are to receive their armament immediately, and will be attached to the Atlantic Squadron. These four are among the fastest ships afloat, and are expected to be of great service in the navy."

"Hurrah!" Gil shouted; and he held up his little book and waved it in the air. But the next moment a different expression spread over his face. It was all very well for him, who was young and hearty, and anxious to fight for his country. But there flashed into his mind a picture of the home among the mountains, and the little mother sitting day after day, week after week, waiting for news of her boy that perhaps might never come.

"We'll be sworn into the navy in short order now," Mr. Crane said, as Hanway went out and shut the door after him. Then noticing Gil's thoughtful look, he added, "You're not going to back out, Standish?"

"No, sir, I am not going to back out," Gil answered.

"I thought you looked a bit shaky, now that it's come to the point," Mr. Crane laughed.

Gil did not laugh in return. He felt little like laughing that afternoon.

"I am more anxious to go than ever," he said; "and I have private reasons for wanting to go that few people in the country have. And my mother has consented; but she may have changed her mind, and I am going to have her consent once more before I enlist. A fellow don't want to break his mother's heart, Mr. Crane."

"Right you are, my boy," Mr. Crane assented. "A fellow has only one mother; and this is not a case where the country is in great need of any one man's services, for millions of men will want to go. But your mother won't stop you, Standish. If she is like you, she has grit, and she'll tell you, 'Go in, young man, and shoot your prettiest.'"

"I hope so, sir," Gil answered, smiling; and he straightway went ashore to the nearest telegraph office and sent this message to his mother: —

"Mrs. Geo. W. Standish, Cairo, N. Y.

"*St. Louis* chartered for navy to-day. I shall enlist at once unless you forbid it. Answer by telegraph.

"Gilbert Standish."

It was late when the message went, and Gil had no great hope of receiving an answer that night. He was

sure, at any rate, of hearing in the morning, and the interval gave him plenty of time to think of what had happened and what was likely to happen. He found that his heart was set upon going with the ship; his fingers tingled to have a hand in the coming fight; to see the ship sail off for the war and he stay behind seemed more than he could bear. But he was as strong mentally as physically, and quite able to master himself, and the faster these thoughts crowded into his mind, the more determinedly he said to himself : —

"I shall try to do what is right. It is not always what we most want that is right. I should rather be shot than stay behind, but that don't count. Unless mother gives her free consent, without any urging, I shall stay at home."

At nine o'clock next morning, Mr. Hawley, the chief engineer, stepped into their room; and Gil began to feel uneasy, for that looked as if something were about to happen, and he had yet received no answer from Cairo. Gil and Mr. Crane were in the room, and Jack Knowles was on watch in the engine room.

"Knowles is on watch, I suppose," Mr. Hawley said, as he closed the door and looked around the room. "Tell him to shut off his steam, Mr. Crane, and come up here."

Gil's heart sank as Mr. Crane repeated the order to Jack Knowles. The chief had never done such a

thing before, and there was no doubt in his mind now of what was coming. Those who were willing were to enlist, and the others were to take their kits and sneak ashore like cowards. It had long been his desire to be one of the very first on board to enter the country's service, and to have to lag behind would be a terrible blow. But in another moment he felt ashamed of himself.

"I said I should do what was right," he repeated to himself, "and I'm going to. I'm not the only fellow who wants to go and can't. If it kills me, I'll not enlist till I hear from home."

Jack Knowles came up from the engine room, black and oily, and looking very much surprised. But his looks changed when he began to suspect what it all meant. He looked pleased then, and Mr. Crane looked delighted. It was the grand moment for which they had waited so long. Gil could feel his heart thump against his ribs. He looked down at the tips of his shoes, and his fingers drummed unconsciously upon the seat.

"Well, my boys," the chief began, "you know what has been going on. The *St. Louis* has been chartered by the government, and is going to the war. But no one in the crew is to be forced into it. If any man on board is afraid to go and fight the Spaniards, he can go ashore and hide behind his mother's apron, and draw his full month's pay."

Gil groaned before he knew it, and then blushed, for he felt that they were all looking at him. He took out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his face. It was wet; and he could not have spoken without breaking down. But he kept saying to himself, "Not till I hear; no, not if it kills me!"

"We want to keep the old crew as far as possible," the chief went on, "and every man shall have a chance. Those of the crew who go must enlist for two years, and the principal officers will have commissions from the President. The ship will be commanded by a naval officer, of course. Now, I have an enlistment paper here, and all who stand by the ship must sign it. Who will—"

He was interrupted by a loud knock at the door; but Gil apparently did not hear the knock. He was picturing himself walking down the gangway with the cowards, jeered and hissed by the men who stayed.

"Come in!" Mr. Crane shouted.

The door opened, and a telegraph messenger entered with a message between the covers of a little black book.

"Gilbert Standish?" he asked.

Gil to this day has no recollection of signing the book and tearing open the envelope, but evidently the sound of his name aroused him.

"As I was saying," the chief went on, when the door closed upon the messenger boy, "all who wish

to stand by the ship must sign the enlistment paper. Who will be the first man in this department to sign?"

"Gilbert Standish, sir!" Gil shouted, springing to his feet. And his name upon the paper was immediately followed by those of Robert Crane and John Knowles.

In a moment more the chief was gone, and young Knowles returned to his work.

"You must have heard from home in the nick of time," Mr. Crane said, glancing toward the telegram that Gil still held in his hand.

For answer Gil unfolded the paper and handed it over, and Crane read it aloud: —

"Do your duty, and God bless you. MOTHER."

"Just what I expected of her!" Crane cried. "Ah, Standish, many a good American mother is looking into her boy's eyes and saying that to-day."

CHAPTER VIII.

DEWEY IS HEARD FROM.

"PASSED, at 8.25 A.M., the U. S. Auxiliary Cruiser *St. Louis*, bound out."

So signalled the ship news reporter from the Sandy Hook station on the morning of May 1. It was a Sunday morning, too; but with an enemy's fleet crossing the ocean and many of our harbors almost undefended, warships were doing a work of necessity in sailing as soon as they could be made ready. It was known that a Spanish fleet, commanded by Admiral Cervera, was approaching our coast, but just where it was or where it would strike no one knew. The first work of the *St. Louis* was to find out.

In one week the *St. Louis* had been changed from a passenger ship into a cruiser. No sooner was her freight out than she was taken to Tompkinsville, on Staten Island, where two rapid-fire guns and twelve three-inch guns were mounted, and seven thousand tons of coal put on board.

So great was the haste that Captain Goodrich, of the navy, her new commander, did not even stop to give

her the coat of dull gray paint that was applied to all the other warships, and she went to sea with a shining black hull.

The *St. Louis* was just the ship that was needed in a hurry. It was necessary to learn where that Spanish fleet was, with its formidable torpedo-boat destroyers, and what port it was heading for, that our own fleet might be sent to head it off and engage it. With her tremendous speed she could run from port to port, from sea to sea, and give the earliest information. Her modern guns and her crew of nearly four hundred men made her powerful enough to handle a whole fleet of merchantmen; but she had no protective armor, and with a battleship or even an armored cruiser she would have had no chance at all. If she met a real fighting ship, her strength was in her speed; she must run for it, and such a watch must be kept, abow and abaft, by day and by night, as was hardly ever kept on a ship before. If she ran under the guns of a hostile battleship by accident, she was a doomed ship.

As the beautiful vessel steamed past Sandy Hook, every man on board was alert, for the Spanish fleet was such a mystery that it might be encountered close under our shores. From the commander down to the last boy, every person on board was alive with patriotism and anxious to give the first news to our fleet of the whereabouts of the enemy. Gil Standish was in his stateroom, making a few remarks to the newest boy in his department.

"This won't do, Hunter," he said, running his hand along a brass rail and showing the smudge that soiled his fingers. "We must have these brasses so you can see your face in them. You'll have to do these over again."

Tom Hunter muttered something under his breath, and began to give the rails a fresh coating of the brown polishing mixture that smelled like peach kernels, which he carried in a copper tray with the cloths and chamois skins he used for cleaning.

Gil was afraid he was going to have trouble with the new boy, who had been taken in a hurry and without the usual careful inquiries in the haste to get the ship off.

For Gil was no longer scouring brasses himself, but was no less a person than the officer in charge of the refrigerating plant, with a corresponding increase in salary. This was only one of many changes that had been made in the crew of the *St. Louis* in the week that she had been preparing for the navy. He did not even know of it when he was at home on his three days' leave to say good-by; but when he returned to the ship he found that the third engineer had declined to go to war, and that his friend Ben Hanway, the fourth engineer, had gone up a step. Then Mr. Crane had been made fourth engineer, and Gil had been given his place, and Tom Hunter had been taken on to complete the refrigerating crew.

So the war had made one promotion for Gil already, though it was so evidently a matter of necessity that he could not take much credit to himself for it.

While Gil was looking over the log-book that he was now compelled to keep, Ben Hanway stepped into the room and sat down.

"What do you think of this, Standish?" he asked. "Did you ever see the *Saint* with a bigger bone in her mouth than she had this morning. I guess we'll get there ahead of time."

It was a common thing for the crew to call their ship the *Saint* when they wanted to be specially affectionate; and the "bone in her mouth" meant the wave of foam in front of her bow when she was making great speed.

"She's like an express train," Gil answered. "Since we got into the lower bay she's been doing twenty-three or twenty-four knots, I should say. But what do you mean by 'getting there,' Ben? Do you know where we're going?"

"Not a bit of it," Ben laughed. "Not a soul on board knows yet, though we can all guess pretty well. We're under sealed orders. Do you know what that means?"

"Not exactly," Gil replied. "You know I've only been in the navy two or three days."

"It means just what it says," Ben explained. "The Navy Department thinks a secret is best kept when no-

body knows it, and I guess that's about true. They don't want the public to know where we're going, so they put our orders in an envelope and seal them up, and instruct the commander to open them when he is so many miles out to sea. That's what they call 'sealed orders,' and we'll know by noon to-day where we're bound for. We know already, in a general way, that we're to hunt the Spanish fleet."

"That's a big enough job," Gil laughed, "when it may be anywhere in the North Atlantic, the South Atlantic, the Caribbean Sea, or the Gulf of Mexico."

"Yes, a greenhorn would look at it that way," Ben assented; "but when you get down to scientific facts, it's not such a big job, after all. You see a modern fleet has to put in somewhere for coal, and that's how we'll catch 'em. They may go in to Porto Rico, or some Cuban port, or any port in the lower West Indies. That's where we've got to watch, and that's where we're bound to find them."

"And then?" Gil asked.

"Then run for it," Ben laughed. "We don't want to run, but we must. If we should meet the Spanish fleet and stay to fight, they'd sink us in a minute, and we'd do no good at all. But if we run for it and give timely notice to our own fleet, we do a great deal of good. And nobody need say we're cowardly because we've got to run. A single shot put through us might send us to the bottom, and we run a much bigger risk

than the men on a battleship. Just let our watch grow careless once and get us within range of a Spanish cruiser, and it's good-by to the *Saint* and all her crew."

"I know it," Gil answered thoughtfully. "But we must take our chances A man don't go to war without knowing what he's about. If we get a shot through us, we'll go down in a good cause."

"I must go and have some sleep before we meet the Spaniards; I'm just off watch," Ben said; and he went out whistling "Yankee Doodle," and Gil turned his attention again to the new boy.

"I'm afraid you're not putting enough muscle into this job, Hunter," he said kindly. "See here; this rail is still dirty." As he spoke he rubbed his hand along the rail and again soiled his fingers.

"I can't make the rail no cleaner," Hunter growled, and threw his scouring-tray into the corner, in a passion.

"Pick up that tray," said Gil.

Hunter made no answer, but stood scowling.

"Pick up the tray," Gil repeated.

Still no answer, and Hunter did not move to obey the order.

It was a very unpleasant situation for the new chief of the refrigerating plant. To have trouble with one of his crew before they were fairly out of the bay would look like poor discipline, but he knew the necessity of having all his orders obeyed.

The new boy's manner was very exasperating, but

Gil kept his temper and tried to make every allowance for his inexperience. Perhaps he remembered how short a time it was since he had been the boy himself, and how in those days a kind word was more effective than harsh usage.

"See here, my boy," he said, after waiting to think a moment, "you'll only make trouble for yourself by behaving in that way. It is necessary for every one on the ship to obey orders, you among the rest. I am willing to overlook your conduct because you are just beginning, but you must take your tray and go to work. Bring it here till I show you how you can make the rail shine."

"I've worked enough on the dirty rail," Hunter growled.

He was so defiantly disobedient that Gil was left no alternative. If he did not bring the new boy to terms now, he would never have any control over him.

"This is the last time I shall ask you," he said; "are you going to obey orders?"

Again Hunter refused to answer, and did not move.

According to all the rules of sea-fiction the young officer should promptly have knocked the offender down and pummelled him into subjection on the spot; and Gil was no doubt able to do it, though the new boy was quite as large as he, and a few months older. But modern sea-customs are as much improved as modern ships.

When Gil rose from his seat Hunter squared off with his fists as if to defend himself; but Gil only smiled at that, and quietly pressed his thumb against an electric button. Then he wrote upon the top sheet of a small pad that lay on his desk, "No. 342 refuses to obey orders. G. Standish, Refrig. Plant."

Three hundred and forty-two was Hunter's crew number. Every man on the ship had his number, and was officially known by it.

In a minute or two one of the engineer's stewards knocked at the door, and Gil tore off the sheet and handed it to him.

"Take that to Captain Goodrich," he said.

Young Hunter looked surprised, for he knew little about the ship's rules and was on the watch for an exercise of physical force; but he soon relapsed into his former expression, glaring alternately at Gil, at the brass rails, and at the copper tray. Gil, however, paid no further attention to him, but went on quietly with his work.

In a few minutes the steward returned with the message: —

"Captain Goodrich wishes to see Mr. Hunter immediately."

Hunter quickly washed the worst of the black from his hands and face and started for the captain's cabin, and when he returned he was quite a new boy. He picked up the tray without a word and fell to work,

scouring the rails as he had never scoured them before. After about five minutes of this work he paused a moment and turned to Gil with: —

"The captain says I have acted very badly, sir. I'm sorry. I'll try to obey orders in the future."

"All right," Gil answered, as pleasantly as if nothing had happened. "You can make things either pleasant or unpleasant for yourself, you know; it all rests with yourself. But orders have to be obeyed, whatever happens."

It was the first time that Gil had seen this discipline enforced in his department, and he was a little surprised to find how excellently it worked. He knew that for a first disobedience of orders Captain Goodrich spoke kindly to Hunter, explaining the necessity of discipline and giving him some good advice. That is the rule not only on all naval ships, but also on the American Line ships in time of peace. But he knew, too, that if such a thing happened more than once to the same man, the culprit would not escape so easily. For a second offence he would be severely lectured by the captain; "well called down," as the boys called it; and for a third offence he would be put in irons and imprisoned in the dark "cooler" on a bread and water diet till he came to a proper frame of mind.

This was Gil's first experience at discipline as commander of the refrigerating plant, and he was delighted to find that the comparatively mild method was so

effective. A few words from the captain had made a new boy of Hunter, and he seemed as anxious now to please as before he had been sullen and obstinate. But Gil was too busy to give as much attention to it as he would have given a few weeks before, and too much occupied with the exciting events that were crowding upon him. He could hardly realize yet that he was really in the United States Navy, an important member of the crew of one of the fastest ships in that or any other service, and that he and his comrades might be under fire at any moment.

Toward the end of the morning watch, when Gil had gone down into the engine room to see that Knowles, who was on duty, was keeping everything running smoothly, Ben Hanway stepped into the stateroom again. Learning from Hunter that "Mr. Standish" was below, he went down to the engine room.

"Heard the news?" he asked.

"No," Gil answered. "What is it?"

"We're bound for Cuba first thing," Hanway continued. "Wouldn't a lot of fellows in both army and navy give a good deal to be in our boots? Yes, sir, the sealed orders have been opened, and we're ordered to Santiago direct. We'll be there before daylight on Wednesday morning, at this speed."

"Santiago!" Gil exclaimed; "why, that's on the south side of the island. I was in hopes we might be sent to Havana."

"Ah, but Santiago is much better," Hanway replied. "That's where we're likely to do the best service. You see Cervera's fleet is supposed to be somewhere down in the lower West Indies, and they believe he is trying to reach Santiago. So they want us there to help watch for him, and give early news of his coming. We couldn't have a better berth than that."

"Well, the Navy Department must know best," Gil laughed. "I'm glad we're going right into the thick of it at first, anyhow. There's no use going to war without having —"

But he did not finish his patriotic sentence, for at that moment the voice of Hunter called down the companionway: —

"Steamer on the port bow, sir!"

It was no part of his business, of course, to make this announcement, but he heard it reported on deck, and knew that his messmates would be glad to know of it.

Gil instantly started for the companionway; but Hanway laid his hand upon his arm and stopped him.

"No use being in a hurry, Standish," he said. "You'll not see anything for half an hour yet. With such a watch as we're keeping on this ship, they're sure to report the first puff of smoke half an hour before you can see anything from the deck. Just look at the watch! A man at each masthead, one at the bow, two on the bridge, and one at the stern, besides every son of a sea-cook in the crew keeping his eyes peeled. If an empty

bottle floated within five miles I believe they'd report it. Take it easy, and after a while you may see something."

"Whatever it is, we're sure to overtake it," Gil agreed. "There's nothing afloat can run away from us, anyhow."

"That's what we're here for," Hanway laughed. "You see already how useful the old *Saint* can be. We can overtake anything, and make short work of anything but a man-of-war."

After a few minutes' talk about the strange steamer, and the possibilities of her being an enemy, they went on deck together, to find everybody who was not on duty looking over the port rail at a cloud of smoke far away to the southeast, and two masts that stood up like needles, and a hazy, dark object beneath them that they knew to be the hull of the vessel, though it was very indistinct.

Hanway ran down to his room for his glasses, and when he returned with them he could make her out quite plainly.

"She's no enemy," he soon announced, "or she wouldn't be lying there like that. She sees us, of course, but she's lying to. She's not big enough for a warship; a steam yacht, I should say, schooner rigged. But she shows no colors, and that's odd. Take a look at her, Standish, and see what you make of her."

Gil took the glass and spent a few moments getting it set to suit his eyes.

"Yes," he said, "she looks something like a yacht; she must be a yacht, unless she's a torpedo-boat destroyer. But I never saw a destroyer, so I don't know how they look. Why on earth don't she show her colors?"

"Ah! she's getting under way, and heading right across our bows, toward the southwest!" Hanway exclaimed. At their great speed they could see her plainly now with the naked eye. "She'll get a gentle hint in a minute or two to introduce herself, if she don't show her colors."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before there was a terrific crash up forward that shook the whole vessel and for a moment almost deafened them.

The *St. Louis* had fired her first shot in the war! Only a blank cartridge, to be sure, from one of her powerful six-pounders, a delicate request for the stranger to stop and give an account of herself.

"Now you'll see her colors go up in a hurry!" Hanway exclaimed. "No, she's going to run for it. She's changing her course to give us a view of her stern. Down with you, Standish!"

These last four words he fairly shouted; and before Gil realized what was happening Hanway threw his weight upon him and bore him to the deck. Almost at the same instant they heard a distant "boom!" from the strange steamer, the shriek of a solid shot over-

head, and some fragments of wire rigging that had been shot away fell to the deck with a clatter.

"Hello, here! that looks like business!" Hanway cried, as he sprang up and helped Gil to his feet. "Excuse me, Standish, for throwing you down. I saw the puff of smoke, and my first impulse was to duck behind something. We'll all get over that before we've been under fire many times, but I suppose it's natural. She'll get some pills now out of our six-pounders, if I'm not mistaken."

"Oh, I hope so!" Gil answered. His blood was well up with the excitement of being under fire, and he felt like running forward to help man the guns. "But she can't pretend to fight us — that little thing."

"Ah, but that little thing may have a better battery than ours!" Hanway answered; "and she can't have thinner sides. That shot she gave us was heavier than any six-pound gun can carry."

Crash went another gun in the bow of the *St. Louis*. Then her course was changed slightly to give her port bow gun a chance, and that was fired also. Each time a solid shot skipped over the water, in a dead line for the stranger. But the distance was too great, and the shots fell short.

And all this time the stranger was not idle. Before the *St. Louis* came to her course again a short section of her port rail was gone, carried away by one of the yacht's heavy shots, that took also one of the awning

stanchions on the other side, and went on its way without doing further damage.

There were not a dozen men on board the ship who had ever been under fire before, and Gil looked around with some anxiety to see how they would stand it. For his own part he was so full of fight he quite forgot that he was one of the greenhorns himself. The deck was full of men who were off duty, who were all cool and collected till it was found that one man, a stoker, had been cut in the arm by an iron splinter. As he was carried off bleeding, there were some signs of nervousness.

"Remember the prize money, boys," an old man-of-warsman shouted, waving his cap. "We'll have that steamer inside of an hour."

This was too much for Gil. Just how it happened he never exactly knew, but the next moment he found himself standing on a coil of rope, waving his cap furiously, and shouting at the top of his voice: —

"Hang the prize money! Remember the *Maine*, boys! Remember the *Maine!*"

Instantly the shout was taken up by all within hearing, and like a flash it spread from one end of the deck to the other: "Remember the *Maine!*"

"You got that in just at the right moment, youngster," said Hanway, who was by his side again. "But look here. I want you to look at the stranger and tell me what you think. Take the glass."

"She's going to run for it," Gil declared, with the glass to his eyes. "And we're after her. And — it can't be — but upon my word it looks to me as if she was gaining on us!"

"That's just the way it looks to me," Hanway answered. "She's a flying dutchman if she can run away from the *St. Louis.*"

The fact that no more shots were fired from either ship confirmed their suspicions, showing that the distance between them had become too great for shots to be effective. And if the astonishment was great among the men on deck, it was far greater on the bridge, where Captain Goodrich stood watching the enemy through his glass. Run away from the *St. Louis!* Why, the idea was absurd; no ship afloat could do that. But there was the yacht ahead, still refusing to show her colors, and putting a broader stretch of water between them every minute.

At first they all refused to believe the evidence of their eyes; but it soon became too plain to be doubted. The *St. Louis* was doing at least twenty-four knots an hour, and the yacht in front of her was forging ahead so fast that she must be making from thirty to thirty-five knots.

In the early part of the chase Gil felt as if he must crowd more steam on his own engine, though that little machine had nothing in the world to do with moving the ship. The stranger was not only a flyer,

but a deep mystery, totally unknown in American waters.

Such a swift enemy was a menace to the entire coast, and it was highly important that the *St. Louis* should capture her. But with every pound of steam on her boilers, and every stoker shovelling in coal till he was ready to drop, the *St. Louis* could not catch her. It was plain that unless the stranger broke down she would escape.

Captain Goodrich was not the man to give up while there was the slightest hope, and he continued the chase after the stranger's hull had disappeared and only her masts were visible, and still held after her when nothing was to be seen but a thin trail of smoke from her funnel. After several hours, however, even the smoke disappeared, and all trace was gone.

It was the middle of the afternoon, or a little after, when the chase was abandoned, and the officers and crew of the *St. Louis* were not only disappointed, but decidedly crestfallen. If the stranger had whipped them in a fight, they could hardly have felt worse over it. Their glory was in their speed, and here was an enemy that could laugh at their twenty-four knots!

"It's one of the mysteries of the sea, youngster," Hanway said, when he and Gil had a chance to meet again. "I don't pretend to explain it. I thought we could catch anything with a keel to it."

"So did I," Gil replied. "That's knocked some of

the conceit out of us, anyhow. And the first day out, too! We'll know more before we come home."

They were to know more sooner than he imagined, for the next minute there came a cry from aloft: —

"Steamer on the starboard bow!"

More than one man on the cruiser hoped that it might be the yacht waiting to exchange another shot with them; but there was little chance of that. The chase had taken them westward, toward the coast, more than fifty miles, and they soon found that the new steamer was approaching them; and she proved in a few minutes to be the *City of Augusta*, of the Savannah line, bound from Savannah for New York.

As soon as she was close enough the *St. Louis* slackened her speed and ran up the signal: —

"We want to speak you."

The sea was too heavy for them to approach one another nearly enough for the use of the megaphone; but when she saw what the other was, the passenger ship dipped her colors and blew her whistle, and stopped her engines when they were nearly abreast.

In less than a minute a huge blackboard was run up into the rigging of the *St. Louis*, bearing the words, in great chalk letters: —

"HAVE YOU SEEN A—"

That was all the first time, for the distance was so great that the letters had to be made very large. The

City of Augusta dipped her colors again, to show that it was understood, and the board was lowered, to be hoisted again immediately with the rest of the message: —

"STEAM YACHT, SCHOONER RIGGED?"

Once more the merchantman dipped her flag; and in a moment more they saw her blackboard rising in the rigging.

"Here, Standish," said Hanway, "take the glass and get into the shrouds and tell us what she says."

As there was no other glass at that part of the deck, a little crowd gathered around to hear Gil's report. He stepped up into the shrouds, and levelled the glass at the distant board.

"No," he read, very slow and distinctly. "Have — you — heard — the — news?"

The men were all eager now to hear, though disappointed that nothing had been seen of the swift stranger. The same dipping of flags followed, and the cruiser's board went up again, bearing the words, "No. Let's have it."

There was deep silence in the little group, and Gil had to take time to the next message, there was so much on the board. Then he read, as loud as before: —

"HEREFORD LIGHT SIGNALLED US AS FOLLOWS: DEWEY'S FLEET IS OFF MANILA BAY, AND—"

It was as well that there was a break there in the message, for no further words could have been heard amid the storm of cheers. There was warrant for the commotion, for the men could see that the officers on the bridge were as much excited as themselves.

"Sh! Sh!" some of the older hands commanded; the distant board was going up again. Gil felt that his voice trembled as he read the next words: —

"AN INTERCEPTED SPANISH DESPATCH SAYS THE CITY AND THE SPANISH FLEET ARE AT HIS MERCY."

It was more than a shout that greeted this announcement; it was a roar that went all over the ship, for many glasses from many parts had been levelled at the board. Men and boys hugged one another. Gil was squeezed nearly breathless by Hanway, then cuffed over the head in pure joy by some unknown hand.

The infection spread to the ship itself. Here blossomed out a flag, there a flag, till in a minute or two she was gay with bunting, and the rapid-fire guns in the fore and main tops began to spit fire.

It was a great sight for the passengers on the other boat to see a warship cutting up high jinks, and they crowded the decks and waved their hats with glee, and

cheered themselves hoarse, though the cheers could not be heard. And the *Saint* answered with the deeper tones of two of her six-pound guns, as she was perfectly justified in doing upon hearing that with the first blow of the war the enemy was about to be completely swept from the Pacific.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE ENEMY'S WATERS.

"DID you notice, Mr. Standish," Jack Knowles asked in the stateroom that night, when Gil came up from his turn on watch, "that that steamer said the news about Manila had been signalled to her from the Hereford lighthouse? I don't understand how a lighthouse could signal the news."

"It couldn't, in ordinary times," Gil answered; "at least it wouldn't. But since the war began every life-saving station on the coast, and every lighthouse, has been made a signal station. That is so that news can be sent rapidly along the coast, if the enemy's ships should be sighted. And they give the news to passing vessels, as far as they can."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" Knowles continued. "Then the news is official, of course. We got it just in time to rub out the soreness over losing that yacht. She gave us enough metal to make us understand that we're really at war, didn't she?"

"She did that," Gil assented. "It was a good thing,

too, and it's taken a great weight off my mind. Do you know I have been afraid ever since I enlisted?"

"Afraid!" Knowles echoed. "I've never seen you act as if you were afraid."

"Yes, I've been in fear all the time," Gil admitted. "I was afraid I might *be* afraid when we were under fire. Nobody can tell, you know, how he's going to act at such a time till he has a trial. I knew my head wouldn't be afraid, but how could I tell what my body was going to do? It might do something cowardly in spite of me, and that would be a thousand times worse than being killed. But it's all right now. I was a little excited this afternoon, but not a bit scared."

"Ah, I guess fellows who feel that way about it don't often get scared under fire," Knowles laughed. "That yacht had big enough guns to sink us, if she'd had the pluck to stay and fight; but I don't think anybody was scared. We were all anxious to have it out with her."

Gil was under the impression that after the work and excitement of the day he should be asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. But he was mistaken about that. There were so many things to think about, and lying in his berth was such a capital place for thinking.

It seemed like an age since he had seen his mother and Rose and the old home, though it was only a few days. And what, he asked himself over and over, was he doing for them, or likely to do for them? He was,

to be sure, in the service of his country; but still he must not forget that he had others to think of and provide for. He had sent home the greater part of his pay every month, and that was more now than ever; but it was not a millionth part enough, he felt, to make up to them for his absence from home.

And how was it all going to end? he wondered. Not the war; no American had a moment's doubt how that would end; but what effect was it going to have upon him and his fortunes, provided he came through it alive? It had long been the belief in his family that if our country once took up the cause of Cuba, their lost estate would soon be restored to them. Now that very thing had happened, but how was it going to bring back the estate? Cuba was to belong to the Cubans, so our government said, and the Cubans might prove as rapacious as the Spaniards had been.

"But it's barely short of treason to be thinking of such things," he said to himself, as he turned over once more and tried to settle down to sleep. "What is our little plantation, compared with the good of the country? Uncle Sam first, my own poor affairs afterward. But I wish we'd captured that mysterious steamer this afternoon."

By the next afternoon there was a sensible change in the temperature. The air had been raw and chilly in New York bay, except when the sun shone bright; but now it was soft and balmy. Gil had stood the forenoon

watch, from eight o'clock till noon; and when he fell to work at his log in the afternoon he found some figures before him that surprised him, and he went into Hanway's room to compare notes with him.

"I wonder whether these figures can be correct, Hanway?" he asked. "Do you make it 593 knots to noon to-day?"

"That's just what it is," Hanway answered. "Eighty-seven knots from the start up to noon of yesterday, and 506 knots from noon to noon. And I reckon that we lost between two and three hours chasing that schooner, too; no wonder it makes you open your eyes. We're just about in the latitude of Charleston now. Never heard of a steamer going from New York to Charleston in twenty-five hours before, did you? No, nor anybody else.

"If this was in times of peace," Hanway went on, "everybody would be talking about the fastest southern voyage that ever was made, for no steamer has ever come south so fast before. You see the southern steamers are not built for great speed, like the Atlantic liners. But this is war, my boy, and people have other things to talk about. Look here."

He took up a pad and rapidly made some calculations.

"New York to Hatteras," he continued, "is 400 miles; Hatteras to Watling's Island, 700 miles; Watling's to Cape Maisi, 275; Cape Maisi to Santiago, 125. There's a total of exactly 1500 miles that we

have to go. At our present speed we will do it in sixty-eight hours (including three hours lost in chasing the schooner), or two days and twenty hours. It never was done before in that time."

"Well, figure this up for me, Ben," Gil interrupted, with the suspicion of a smile about his mouth. "If the *St. Louis*, the fastest ship in the world, makes twenty-one knots an hour, and chases a steamer making thirty-five knots, how long will it take to catch her?"

"Never you mind, youngster," Hanway replied. "The *Saint* is a flyer, no matter who beats her. Some time to-night we'll be among the Bahama Islands, and before noon to-morrow we should pass Watling's Island, where Columbus made his first landing; Cape Maisi, which is the eastern end of Cuba, to-morrow night, and Santiago before daylight on Wednesday morning."

"Provided we chase no more steamers," Gil suggested.

"Provided we chase no more steamers," Hanway assented. "And it don't look much like it, does it? We've not sighted smoke or sail since we spoke the Savannah steamer. You see we're out of the track of commerce; and commerce is lying pretty low just now anyhow, on account of the war."

Perhaps it was as well that when the *St. Louis* passed Watling's Island next morning about an hour before noon she was too far away for the crew to see anything but a long dark spot, with some cocoanut trees

rising from it. They were all eager to see the land upon which Columbus first set foot on this side of the world, and a close inspection might have disappointed them, for the island is little more than a low heap of sand, brightened but hardly improved by the thick tropical vegetation.

But if they saw little of the island, they were reminded that they were nearing their destination and running into dangerous waters, for at noon that day the watch was doubled. They thought before that the watch was about as strict as it could be made; but where one man was before, two men were stationed now. There was need for watchfulness, for they were within twelve hours of the eastern end of Cuba.

Almost every hour the air became warmer, and the sea more smooth. Gil had read in the newspapers of the large number of American vessels about the Cuban coast; but they were mostly in the neighborhood of Havana, and there was no sign of them or of any other boats but a few venturesome fishing smacks from the decks or mastheads of the *St. Louis*. All was as peaceful as an ordinary run across the Atlantic; and more quiet, notwithstanding the greater size of the crew. Still every man on board the ship, Gil among the rest, began to feel that active and dangerous work was close ahead.

At half-past three that afternoon (and as dates are important in such matters, we must remember that it

was Tuesday, the third of May), Gil was surprised by a visit from the chief engineer. The chief made his one visit of inspection every day, but beyond that he seldom appeared in Gil's department, unless his advice was needed about something.

"All hands on duty, to-night, Mr. Standish," he said, "beginning with the first dog-watch. We are just getting into the Crooked Island Passage, and soon after dark we shall be in the enemy's waters. Every man is expected to be on the alert."

"Very well, sir," Gil answered; and although the order deprived him of a night's sleep, he was glad to receive it. It was a welcome order to nearly every man on the ship, for it gave them all a chance for an early view of the rich island upon which the eyes of the whole world were turned, and on whose coasts most of the fighting was expected to be done.

"Land on the starboard bow!" was reported by the lookouts at about ten o'clock that evening, and by eleven they were fairly rounding Cape Maisi, the eastern point of Cuba.

"That is worth coming to war for; almost worth being shot for, to see such a sight as that," was Gil's verdict, as he and Ben Hanway stood looking over the rail. "I did not imagine there was such a beautiful spot in the world."

There was some reason for his enthusiasm, though compared with many other West Indian scenes Cape

Maisi is barren and commonplace. The Spaniards had extinguished the light in the lighthouse, knowing that it would be of service to their enemy; but they had no control over nature's great lighthouse in the sky, and the May moon, within three days of being full, bathed the bold landscape in its soft light. It was almost as bright as day, and they had a full view of the rocky point, the narrow plateau, and the mountains rising behind, terrace upon terrace, with almost as much regularity as if measured off by a landscape gardener; and higher yet the rugged crags and peaks stretching up nearly into the clouds. The awful solitude added to the weirdness of the scene, for no human being enlivens the landscape, and for miles and miles there is no human habitation save the little stone dwelling of the light-keeper.

During the remainder of the night the mountains of Cuba were in sight, and there was hardly an hour without its fresh excitement. Toward three o'clock in the morning the lights of a vessel were sighted as they passed the harbor of Guantanamo, and there was every probability that she was a friend; but no risks could be run, and the *St. Louis* immediately opened a conversation with her by firing a rocket. In naval language the rocket said: —

"I am the *St. Louis*. Who are you?"

There was an anxious interval of about a minute, and then an answering rocket went up from the other ship.

"The *Marblehead!*" was joyfully shouted on the flyer's decks as the men read the signal; and before the shout died away the fighting cruiser fired a welcoming salute for the newcomer, which the *St. Louis* answered with her six-pound guns.

From Guantanamo to Santiago is less than fifty miles, and before daylight the *St. Louis* was riding safely in front of the great castle at the mouth of Santiago harbor, close beside the *Yale* and two gunboats; and the rising sun presently threw his golden beams upon a scene compared with which the vaunted bay of Naples is insignificant, a beauty spot whose name was destined soon to take a glorious place in the history of American skill and valor.

CHAPTER X.

THE HERO OF GUANTANAMO.

"THE *St. Louis* will proceed to Guantanamo shortly after midnight to-night, accompanied by the *Marblehead* and others, to cut Spanish cables."

This brief extract from a much longer order was posted in the engine room of the *St. Louis*, for the information of the engineers, within six hours after the ship's arrival at Santiago.

"They're not going to let us waste any time, are they?" Gil laughed, as he went in to see Ben Hanway. "That ought to give us some lively work, for we'll likely have to do the cutting under the fire of some of their forts."

"Right under the forts of Caimanera," Hanway answered, and began to whistle, "There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night," which was more expressive than words. "But they're giving us a chance to send a farewell to our friends. I suppose you know that one of the gunboats is about to start for Key West? So you can send letters home."

"Yes, and the *Yankee* is expected here every minute,

so I hear," Gil replied, "so we may possibly get some. I just brought back your wrench, with the thanks of the refrigerating department, and I'm going back to write my letter. I'll see you to-night, at Guantanamo."

"Yes, under the shadow of the forts," Hanway laughed; and Gil hurried to his room to do his writing.

No one knew better than he that cutting cables under the fire of the forts was going to be dangerous work, and that some of them were probably at that moment writing their last letters. But he had wisely determined never to write his mother of what they were about to do, and so leave her in painful suspense till the next letter came. It was far better, he thought, to tell her of what had already been done, when the danger was past.

"It is glorious here in front of the old castle," he wrote, "and the only thing lacking is not having you all here to help enjoy it. I almost wish girls could go to war; I think Rose would fight like a Turk. The Castle of Santiago occupies a high, rocky hill on the eastern side of the narrow mouth of the harbor, and it is so old and weather-stained that it is hard to tell what part is natural rock, and what was built by hands. The rock at the base has been eaten into by the waves, making deep caves. If we could get a good charge of dynamite into them, we might blow the whole thing into the air.

"I do not see how any spot on earth could be as

beautiful as this. The green mountains, the castle painted in many dim colors, pale blue, pale yellow, faded pink, and crumbling in some places.

"'How far are we from the Spanish guns?' I know you will want to ask. Well, I should say about four miles from the castle. But this morning we ran up to within about a mile and a half, just for practice, and let her have a little metal from our six-pounders. Of course such small guns could do it no harm, but we saw the stones and dust fly whenever one of our shots struck. They fired about twenty shots at us with their big guns, but hit nothing. They say the Spanish gunners rarely hit anything. That makes twice I have been under fire, and it does not seem to be dangerous. I shall go home a scarred veteran, I hope; but whether the adjective is to be spelled with one *r* or two, remains to be seen.

"The map will show you that I am at this moment within twenty miles of our plantation! How I should like to see it. But I might as well be a thousand miles away, for there is no earthly chance to go ashore. But strange things happen in war times, and we must wait and see."

Not a word about the danger he was sure to be in within a few hours, though he knew it would be greater than either he or Hanway had mentioned, for it had been whispered about the ship that they were to shell the forts, and for an unprotected vessel like the *St.*

Louis there was no safety except in the poor gunnery of the Spaniards. A great cheer went up from the deck of the unprotected cruiser at one o'clock next morning when the *Marblehead* arrived from the eastward and the *St. Louis* hoisted the lights that signalled: "Follow as ordered, at half speed." They were off for their first real fight in the war, and in cutting the cables they would help cut off Havana from the rest of the world, and there might even be a chance to achieve some glory.

The *St. Louis* led the procession. Then came the *Marblehead* and the *Yankee*, the latter having arrived as expected, but bringing no mails. And in the rear were two small gunboats, the largest gunboat on the spot being left behind to guard the entrance to Santiago harbor until the return of the squadron.

It was hardly necessary to repeat the order of the previous day, "All hands on duty to-night." There was not a man in the little fleet who would have turned in for anything short of positive orders.

Half speed was soon found to be too great, and the *St. Louis* hoisted a signal to slow down. At this greatly reduced speed the fleet reached the entrance to Guantanamo harbor just as the rising sun began to gild the rocks and forts on shore, as Captain Goodrich desired; for this left him time for a full day's work, if necessary.

Caimanera, both town and forts, lay about a mile

inside the harbor mouth, on the western shore; and as the ships majestically rounded the point and steamed leisurely in, the sunrise gun was fired from one of the forts, and the Spanish colors rose to the top of the staff.

"Better save your powder; you'll need it to-day," Gil said to himself, as the report of the sunrise gun echoed in the hills beyond. He had been on watch from midnight till four o'clock, and so was at liberty till noon, and stood watching events over the port rail.

Not a signal now, for everything had been arranged beforehand, and each ship knew precisely what its station would be unless the orders were changed. On they went, slowly and quietly, their guns bristling as if impatient for action, the much greater guns of the forts frowning angry defiance. Not a shred of bunting was displayed on any one of the ships, for the ship time was a few minutes slower than shore time, and the American sunrise had not quite arrived. Not a sound from ships or forts. It looked as if each were waiting for the other to begin the fight.

"Stop!" said the bells in the engine room of the *St. Louis*. Slowly the *Marblehead* forged ahead, as had been arranged. She was the real fighting ship of that little squadron, and she must bear the brunt of the battle. None of them more than a mile from shore, but the gunboats slightly sheltered by the larger ships. "Crack!" from one of the bow guns

of the *St. Louis*, followed by a flash of fire from one of the *Marblehead's* greater guns, and instantly the stars and stripes floated proudly over every ship.

That was the signal for which a thousand gallant Yankee tars were waiting. The reports of the guns had hardly died away before a rain of metal began to thunder against the stone walls of the nearest fort. The heavy guns of the *Marblehead*, and the lighter but still very powerful ones of the *St. Louis* and *Yankee*, began their work; and the smooth bay, so peaceful and quiet a moment before, became a tropical pandemonium. The first shock of the big guns was still deafening the gallant Americans when the rapid-fire guns on all three of the ships opened fire, adding the sharp crack of heavy musketry to the furious booming of their stronger comrades.

It was a grand sight, before the smoke obscured it, to see the heavy masses of metal tearing away corners of the fort, and others, exploding, throwing little volcanoes of stone and sand. But a battle is not all on one side, and the forts were not idle. The crash of their guns was soon heard, and the deadly whistle of their missiles, which at first were far too high, and passed over the fleet without harming it. The Spaniards had a great advantage, however, in the use of smokeless powder. They could always locate the ships by the flashes in the densest masses of smoke,

while the Americans were enveloped in the cloud, and soon had no view of the shore.

Gradually the Spanish shots came lower and lower, and on the *St. Louis* bits of the rigging were carried away and fell to the deck in a dangerous shower.

Still Gil stood close by the port rail. There was some one by his side now, but in the din and excitement he did not notice who it was. A great crash in the rear, made by one of the gunboats steaming up and delivering a volley, caused him to turn his head for a moment, and in that moment something struck him full in the face and chest, and he fell to the deck like a log, with streams of blood running down his face and neck.

When he came to his senses it seemed to him as if he must have been unconscious a long time, though it had been only for a moment. It flashed upon him that a cannon ball had struck him in the face, and when he opened his eyes it was almost with the expectation of seeing his mangled head lying about somewhere. Something was the matter with his legs, too, for he could not move them; and his clothes were soaked with blood.

There was a weight upon his legs, and hearing a groan from the weight restored him to the full use of his faculties. His head, he found, was still upon his shoulders, and when he raised himself to a sitting posture he discovered that young Clark, who had once been one of his bosses, was lying across his legs with a deep

gash in one cheek, which spouted blood so furiously that his own gory condition was easily accounted for. He sprang up and called help to carry Clark to the surgeons, and not till that was done did he know exactly what had happened. But the state of the rail soon told the story. A Spanish shot had struck it and carried away about eight feet of it, and Clark, the man who was standing beside him, had been struck in the face by some flying fragment; and it was his body, not a cannon ball, that had sent Gil sprawling.

Meanwhile the firing continued on both sides, though the Spaniards were evidently weakening. A welcome puff of wind came down from the hills and cleared away the smoke, and instantly, between the crashes, there arose a mighty shout from the decks of all the ships: —

"Ah! Ah! See the Dons go! Remember the *Maine!* Remember the *Maine!*"

For the road between the forts and the town of Caimanera was full of Spanish soldiers running as fast as their legs would carry them, and hundreds more were fairly falling over each other in their haste to abandon the forts and escape from the deadly American fire. But the Spanish fire was by no means silenced. A dangerous rain of metal still poured from a large battery further up the hill, and one bastion of the larger fort still held out unharmed.

The *St. Louis* took advantage of the absence of

smoke to hoist some signals, which the men watched eagerly.

"Gunboats proceed to cut cables," the signals read; and at that moment Ben Hanway came up behind Gil.

"The gunboats are going to take their medicine now," he said; "I tell you —" But at that moment Gil turned and faced him, and Hanway paused in astonishment. "What kind of a gory veteran are you, anyhow? Say, you look as if you'd eaten a Spanish regiment for breakfast. Are you hurt?"

"No," Gil answered. "It's Aleck Clark's gore, not mine."

"Well, upon my word," Hanway continued, taking Gil by the shoulder and holding him off for a better view, "your folks at home would give a bag of money for a picture of you just as you look now. 'Gilbert Standish as he appeared while whipping the Spaniards in Guantanamo Bay.' They ought to send you ashore to take the forts alone. One sight of you would scare the Dons away."

Gil was indeed a sanguinary sight. A severed artery in Clark's cheek had spurted blood upon him for at least a minute, and it had begun already to harden and stiffen his clothes. He had wiped the thickest of it from his face with his handkerchief, leaving it in streaks. He had thrown off his coat to make a temporary rest for Clark's head, and his white

shirt-sleeves were stained and spotted with red. His hat was gone, too, and his hair was matted and gory.

"Never mind," he laughed; "there's plenty of water on board. What worries me is standing here looking on. Next time I come to war I'll be a fighter, Hanway, not an engineer."

"Oh, don't worry your little mind, my child," Hanway answered. They were talking as coolly, under that heavy fire, as if there had been no Spanish guns on shore. "There's no telling what may happen before our work's done. There go the gunboats, and they're going to have a hot time of it.

"I don't mind telling you," he continued, "that we haven't accomplished what we expected — not so far. How do I know? Because I have eyes in my head to see with. It's not hard to see what the idea was in this morning's work. There's only one fighting ship in the fleet, and the *St. Louis* and *Yankee* certainly would not have been brought here for any serious business. The plan was to destroy the forts at the first blow, and leave the way clear for us to cut the cables. We can't give them a harder dose than we gave them at first."

"No," Gil agreed; "we've given them the hottest fire we can."

As he spoke, a shell that must otherwise have passed between them burst about twenty feet from the ship's

side, scattering a shower of missiles in every direction. The two men looked significantly at one another, but did not flinch.

"Well," Hanway continued, "we haven't silenced the forts. That battery on the hill and part of the larger fort are intact, and are still pounding us. So the first part of our plan has failed, for driving a few of their men out doesn't amount to much. But Captain Goodrich isn't the man to give up such a job. He will cut those cables anyhow, and we'll have to do it under fire. So there's a chance for hot work coming, and you don't need to fret about having nothing to do."

"How many cables are there?" Gil asked.

"Three, I understand," Hanway replied; "two large and one small one. And the small one is the most important, for that is the one that supplies Santiago with news. And we don't want them to know anything about Cervera's fleet."

The two gunboats had gone shoreward meanwhile and were dragging for the cables, utterly regardless of the heavy fire that was now directed mainly upon them, but keeping up an incessant fire themselves.

In a few minutes a cheer from a group of men forward indicated that something had happened; and as the men were all looking toward the forward gunboat, Hanway raised his glass to see what it was.

"Good enough!" he shouted. "There's one cable accounted for. When they begin to swing the axe,

you may be sure they've got a cable. Take a look, Standish."

Gil took the glass, and saw that the gunboat had a large chopping-block up forward, upon which one of the men was chopping off lengths of cable with an axe as fast as a half-dozen others could draw it in.

A long interval followed this first success, during which the gunboats continued to drag for cables, all the ships returning the heavy fire that still came from the forts. It was only too evident that the batteries of the fleet were not sufficient to silence the big land battery or the lower end of the first fort, and that the remainder of the work must be done under fire.

At length a second cable was caught and cut; but the small cable had not yet been found, and that was the one that was most wanted. It seemed hours that the gunboats worked away under a fire that would have annihilated them if the Spaniards had been better marksmen; but still there was no sign of the small cable.

"Now what's up?" Hanway asked, half of himself, as one of the gunboats turned and steamed toward the flagship.

"I hope they haven't disabled her. No; she seems to be all right."

Right up to the *St. Louis*, as close as she dared, the gunboat came, and they could see her captain talking to Captain Goodrich, who was still on the bridge.

They had no means of knowing that the gunboat had reported that the water was too deep for them to grapple the small cable, and that the only chance was to send a small boat of light draft close in shore, into the shallow water. But they could guess it from the order that was immediately given from the bridge and repeated along the deck: —

"Lower a launch to cut cables!"

Every man on the ship who was not on duty either with the guns or with working the vessel was on deck, and every man knew that to go right under the fire of the fort in the little launch was to court almost certain death.

"Volunteers for the launch!" came in a strong voice from the bridge.

There had been noisy shouts on the deck of the *St. Louis* before, but never one to equal the eager cry that greeted that request. Every man on deck who could leave his post rushed madly toward the bridge, some with both hands in the air, others waving their caps, all shouting at the tops of their lungs in the hope that the captain might see and select them. It was a service of extreme danger if not of certain death, and every man on deck volunteered for it on the spot.

A smile of satisfaction spread over Captain Goodrich's face as he saw the stuff his brave boys were made of. He raised his hand a moment to command silence,

then turned to consult one of his officers, and in less than a minute the officer stepped forward and read from the back of an envelope the names of the men who had been selected.

"Ensign Walcott," he read, "Engineer Standish, Cotsell, Alderoft, Preston, and Jeffrey."

Amid a cheer from the men the six fortunate ones, as they considered themselves, made a rush toward the launch, which was already in the water, with steam up. As Gil reached for the rope to slide down, Hanway laid a hand upon his shoulder. In an instant their hands were clasped and they looked affectionately into one another's eyes, realizing that they might never meet again.

"You are very young, Standish," the brave engineer said; "let me take your place."

"Not for millions!" Gil exclaimed. "Take charge of my things, old fellow. If I don't come back, write to my folks."

The last words he called out as he was sliding down the rope, and next minute the launch was away, with block and axe in the bow, grappling-irons hanging by the sides, and six gallant men aboard, who, as the little launch ran closer every moment into the hail of fire and metal, shouted back in answer to the cheers from the cruiser's deck. "Remember the *Maine!* Remember the *Maine!*" And the cheers spread from ship to ship, and a thousand Yankee tars shouted their encouragement, and envied them their luck.

With Ensign Walcott in command, and Gil in charge of the little engine, the launch steamed at the top of her speed directly toward the shore, heading for a point about midway between the remains of the block-house where the cables landed, and the lower end of the larger fort. It was well understood, though not expressed in words, that the only chance of success lay in making a quick dash for it, for the launch could not be expected to keep afloat long under the deadly fire of both fort and battery.

Ensign Walcott had made up his mind that the best point for grappling was about four hundred yards from shore, at such an angle with the fort that not more than two or three of its guns could well be trained upon him, though the battery beyond would still have full sweep. And amidst the flying shot the swift little boat made her best time for that spot, the men eager for their deadly work, encouraged by the swarms of comrades on the ship who crowded every available place to watch and cheer them.

The best-laid plans sometimes miscarry, as the gallant ensign soon found. When the launch reached the appointed spot, her colors shot away, the top of her brass-coated funnel in tatters, and Preston lying bleeding in the bottom of the boat, the grapnels were brought into use, and it was discovered that the bottom was covered with jagged rocks, among which the grapnels had no chance to seize the cable. Several times they

grated against it, and almost had it, only to be thrust aside by a sharp corner of rock.

It was a trying moment, with the balls whistling about them and cutting the water on all sides. Their own danger was unthought of; but the launch itself, upon which all their hopes of success lay, could not live for many minutes under that terrible fire. It was little short of a miracle that she had not already been blown out of the water.

At this critical time, when nothing seemed to be left for them but ignominious retreat, Gil saw a chance to do something for his country. He had kept a sharp eye upon the grapnel ropes, and knew that the depth of water was from twelve to fifteen feet. Nobody noticed when he stooped down and rapidly unfastened and pulled off his shoes; but all eyes were turned upon him a moment later, when he sprang up in his place and tore off his vest.

"Keep her steady a moment, Mr. Walcott!" he cried; and before the astonished ensign could reply, he had plunged headlong into the riddled waters of Guantanamo bay.

At the very moment of the dive, but too late for Gil to see, Cotsell fell forward from his seat, deluged with blood, and a small shot, evidently from a rapid-fire gun, tore its way through the starboard side of the launch, below the water-line, making a jagged hole through which the water poured in a torrent that would soon

THEY SPRANG FORWARD AND SEIZED IT, AND FAIRLY LIFTED GIL INTO THE BOAT.

have sunk her if Alderoft had not plugged it with his coat.

It seemed an age that Gil was in the water, though it was in reality about one hundred and ten seconds. But at length his head and shoulders appeared ten feet away, and with a few quick strokes with one hand he reached the boat and seized the gunwale. With one hand only, for the other hand was gripped like a vice around the missing cable.

Jeffrey and Alderoft, seeing what he had, sprang forward and seized it and fairly lifted Gil into the boat, and within a minute the cable was lying across the block in the bow and the sharp axe was severing it.

On board the ships they saw the axe descend and knew that the work was done, and cheer after cheer came across the water.

"Bravo, Standish!" the ensign cried. "Cheerily, boys! get a good length of it for souvenirs, and we're off."

It was a slender thing, about an inch and a half in diameter, and they drew thirty feet of it into the boat and cut it again, and at Walcott's order Gil opened the throttle, and the boat made a graceful sweep toward comparative safety. Gil had no time to wring the water out of his clothes or to think of what he had done. The cable was cut, and that was enough, and he was lucky to have a chance to pull on his shoes.

But it was another story when the launch reached

the *St. Louis* in safety. The men on board had seen the plucky dive, but they could not distinguish the man who made it. A hundred voices would have asked the question, and some indeed had already asked it, when Gil's dripping clothes answered it once and for all.

As Gil climbed up the ship's side, nothing was further from his thoughts than being made a hero. Soaked first with blood, then with sea-water, exhausted and shivering, he wanted nothing half so much as the bath-tub and dry clothes, when his ears were greeted with cries of: —

"Standish! It was Standish! Three cheers for Standish!"

It was nine cheers and a roar that they gave him; and in the midst of it Ben Hanway had him in his arms and was hugging him, dripping as he was; and his admiring comrades seemed in a fair way to pull him to pieces, when the officer of the deck stepped up and stopped the commotion by saying: —

"Well done, Standish. Go and change your clothes, sir."

And even in the privacy of his own bath-room, which was not remarkably comfortable in a ship under a heavy fire, he was not to be left in peace; for while he was washing off the remains of Clark's clotted blood, a steward tapped at the door with the message: —

"Captain Goodrich wishes to see you at once, sir."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEWS REACHES HOME.

ON Saturday, the seventh of May, Mrs. George W. Standish sat by one of the sitting-room windows of the Cairo house, looking thoughtfully out at the pouring rain. Spring had come in the Catskill region so far as to bring rain instead of snow, but the air was still raw, and the mantle of white had not entirely disappeared from the mountain tops.

Mrs. William J. was making over an old dress, and Rose was reading the newspaper of the day before, which was so full of war news that there was hardly room for anything else. Great were the prophecies in those days of the wonderful things that Uncle Sam was going to do. To run over to Havana some morning and take it by storm before breakfast would be only a little amusement for our army and navy. The President had called for only one hundred and twenty-five thousand volunteers, but that was because one American could easily whip five or six Spaniards. We could put an army of a million men in the field in thirty days. But that was before we had learned from ex-

perience that even twenty thousand men put in a field are very likely to grow cold and hungry and to fall sick and die unless preparations have been made beforehand to feed and clothe them, or that a million men, even brave and eager Americans, are useless in war until properly armed and equipped.

Rose was as ignorant of such matters as the rest of us were then, however, and her heart swelled as she read of the great things we were going to do.

"I don't believe it's worth while for you to go down to the post-office in this storm, Rose," Mrs. William J. suggested, looking up a moment from her work. "You'd get soaking wet, and we can't possibly have a letter yet from Gil. He has just nicely reached Cuba by this time, and we may hear in a week or so. And I suppose we can wait a little for the paper. The rain may stop by and by."

If Gil had been home, he would instantly have seen the look of disappointment that came into his mother's face. Indeed, he would have discovered long before that she was nervous and uneasy every morning until the mail came. Mrs. William J. was not much given to nerves, and she hardly saw that her sister-in-law took any unusual interest in public affairs. Rose noticed that her aunt was anxious for the mail, but she did not see down into the suffering heart as Gil would have seen with his eyes shut.

"Oh, I think I may as well go," Rose replied. "If I bundle up well, this rain will not do me any harm. We all want to see the paper, you know."

"No, I think it would be a shame to let you go out in this storm, and you with such a cold," Gil's mother objected, starting up from her seat. "Just you sit still, and I'll put on my big cloak and run down myself. I need a little fresh air, anyhow."

But Rose insisted upon going, and after the familiar amount of friendly bickering she set out.

Under ordinary circumstances, with no letters, no mail but the newspaper, she would have returned home slowly, reading the paper as she walked. But this rainy morning it was more convenient to put the paper under her waterproof and hurry home, and in a very few minutes her wrappings were thrown off and she stepped dry-shod into the sitting room and handed it to her aunt, with the melancholy announcement that there were no letters. By common consent Mrs. George W. always had the first chance at the paper after it reached the house, for it was *her* boy who had gone to war and from whom they were ever on the look-out for news. Rose noticed that her aunt's hand was a little shaky as she took the paper and tore off the wrapper, but she had noticed that often before. If she had watched more closely, she would have seen that the reader's eyes were almost instantly fixed upon one particular part of the paper and did not wander over

the page; and that her expression, at first anxious and eager, soon became fixed and stern.

Neither of them noticed this at first. But they did think it strange that she was so long silent, for she generally read at least the headings aloud. This time she did not open her firmly set lips, but sat absorbed in one of the articles before her. It was the usual long heading with the short despatch under it, and she read it through twice, slowly and carefully, before any one spoke.

Then Rose, startled by the look in her aunt's face, stepped toward her.

"What is it, aunty?" she asked. "No bad news?"

Before Rose could reach her Mrs. George W. was on her feet. With her thumb at the top of the article she handed Rose the open newspaper; and then putting her handkerchief to her face she hastily quitted the room.

By this time Mrs. William J. was on her feet too, for it was plain that there was news, and she expected nothing but that the *St. Louis* had been sunk and Gil drowned.

"Oh, mother, listen to this!" Rose cried; and with trembling voice she read the big heading: —

"Fight in Guantanamo Bay!
Caimanera Forts Destroyed — Important Cables Cut.
Auxiliary Cruisers Give Battle.

St. Louis and *Yankee* Take their Baptism of Fire.
Great Bravery of a Greene County Boy.
Engineer Standish Dives from a Launch Under the Fire of the Forts and Secures the Last Cable.
The *Marblehead* Demolishes the Forts."

But Rose could not get beyond the heading. With every line her voice had grown more shaky, and when she came to the name of "Engineer Standish" she broke down completely and threw herself into a chair and buried her burning face in her hands. It was then that her mother took up the paper and continued the reading: —

"*Guantanamo*, May 6, via Cape Haitien, midnight. — The forts of Caimanera were completely destroyed by an American fleet yesterday, and all the cables cut. At sunrise the *Marblehead*, *St. Louis*, *Yankee*, and two gunboats steamed into the harbor and immediately opened fire.

"The intention was to destroy the forts at the first onslaught, as several of the vessels, notably the *St. Louis*, were unarmored and not fitted for such work. But this failed, and the cables had to be cut under the galling fire of one fort and a large battery on the hillside.

"There were two large cables and one small one, the latter by far the most important. The gunboats cut

both large ones, but could not find the small one, and a steam launch was lowered from the *St. Louis* to find and cut it further inshore, almost under the forts.

"Upon a call for volunteers for the launch, every available man on the *St. Louis* rushed forward, eager for the dangerous work. The crew chosen was as follows: Ensign Walcott (in command), Engineer Standish, Cotsell, Alderoft, Preston, and Jeffrey.

"The launch ran at full speed into a perfect hailstorm of missiles, losing her colors and being well riddled before she began to drag for the cable.

"The bottom was found to be so rocky that the cable could not be grappled, and the attempt was about to be abandoned, when Engineer Standish plunged head-first into the water in the midst of the hail of heavy shot, and in a minute came to the surface with the small cable in his hand. It was immediately cut, and the crippled launch returned to the ship.

"Preston was dangerously wounded in the launch, and Cotsell was instantly killed. The launch itself is a wreck, but it is to be saved as a valuable relic of the war. In his report to the department, Captain Goodrich has specially commended Engineer Standish for great bravery in action.

"After the cables had been cut the *St. Louis* and *Yankee* returned to Santiago, as their mission was accomplished. The *Marblehead* and the two gunboats remained, and reduced the forts after a heavy action of

about four hours. They afterwards sailed for Santiago without landing marines or occupying the deserted town.

"At the office of the American Line it was learned last night that Engineer Gilbert Standish was in the company's employ before hostilities began. He comes from Cairo, Greene County, in this state, and is barely eighteen years old. The Superintendent of the line says it is no surprise to him to hear that young Standish has distinguished himself. That he is a brave lad who will do his duty under all circumstances. He is also an expert swimmer, having saved the Superintendent's son from drowning before he entered the service of the company."

"Boo, hoo, hoo!" Rose gasped, as the reading concluded, her head still buried in her hands.

"And here's the girl who wanted to go to war herself!" her matter-of-fact mother exclaimed. "What is there to cry about? Hasn't Gil done his duty, as a boy should? And isn't he all safe and well? I don't see what more you can ask."

Rose recovered herself as quickly as she had broken down, and retorted that she "guessed it was natural to feel a little excited when her own cousin was such a hero."

And what of Gil's mother all this time? We must give her the poor privilege of the solitude she sought,

and not presume to follow her to her favorite thinking-place, the attic where the black trunk still stood. Whether she was on her knees or not we can only guess; but we can stop long enough to wonder whether the real heroes of the war are all found on the field of battle. It was a brave thing that Gil did in Guantanamo bay, and other gallant boys did other brave deeds along those Cuban shores. But if some of them could have been at home to see the anxiety, the sinkings at the heart, the dreadful watching of the lists of killed and wounded, they would have seen that the heroes were not all in uniform.

The very best thing happened to the Standish household before either Rose or Mrs. William J. ventured upstairs to interrupt Gil's mother. There came a violent ring at the bell, and when Rose went to the door, taking time enough in the hall to remove every vestige of her recent tears, she found D. K. Stevens outside, dripping with rain, and holding in his hand an open newspaper, as wet as himself.

"Why, D. K.," she exclaimed; "you'll be washed away. Come in and get dry."

It is only strangers in Cairo, you must remember, who ever call D. K. "Mr. Stevens." To every resident of that region, from High Peak down to low-water mark of the Hudson River, he is simply D. K.

"I can't stop a minute," D. K. answered, shaking the rain out of his whiskers. "Just ran up to the post-

office. But I had to come in a minute after I saw the paper. Have you heard the news?"

"Yes, we've got the paper," Rose replied. "It's upset us dreadfully. But isn't he — isn't it splendid, D. K.?"

"Upset you!" D. K. repeated, as he stepped into the sitting room. "Why, I thought you'd be too proud to let me talk to you. I should be, if I were in your place. Everybody's talking about it. Next time Gil comes home he'll get a big reception, I guess. Cairo always comes to the front, you know, and Gil is just the boy to show them we're alive up here. But just think of diving for a cable through all those cannon balls! Why, listen to this —"

And D. K. turned to the part of the description that pleased him best and began to read. And Gil's mother, hearing what was going on, could not stay away; and for the next half-hour Gil's ears must have tingled, if there is any truth in that old saying.

It did seem as if the climax of fame had been reached next morning when the minister prayed earnestly for "that brave young defender of his country, our fellow-townsman, whose heroic deed in the face of the enemy has startled the whole world." But fame is an uncertain fellow at the best, coming of a short-lived family; and Mrs. Standish began to suspect that Duty is a much bigger word than Glory, when the next week's Catskill paper came along.

So glorious a deed performed by a resident of the county could not pass unnoticed by the local newspapers; and the editor of the one in question shrewdly suspected that this hero might at some time or other have been photographed by some one of the Catskill artists. This suspicion proved to be well founded, and the editor became possessed of a picture that Gil had had taken before he was sixteen years old. But with all his shrewdness he could not foresee what a dreadful mess the engravers and printers and proofreaders would make of it.

When the paper was opened, the Standish family were at first indignant; but their indignation soon changed to merriment, for there in a prominent place was a big black splotch of printer's ink in which nothing could be distinguished but the end of an old-fashioned round-cornered collar, and an explanation under it that this was the portrait of

"Gilbert Slaudish, of Cairo,
The Hero of Gnantanawo."

CHAPTER XII.

MAKING A NEW CUBAN.

WHEN the commander of a warship wishes to see a member of his crew at once, he is not to be kept waiting. Gil would have been glad if he could have taken time to make a better toilet before entering the sacred precincts of the captain's room, but it must not be. With his hair still matted, collarless, and with his best uniform coat hastily thrown on, he hastened to obey the summons.

After the ovation he had received on deck, it was perfectly natural for him to believe that his exploit in the launch had something to do with his being sent for by the captain; and he began almost to wish that he had let the cable alone.

"It will be terrible if he is going to talk to me about that," he said to himself. "I'd rather dive for more cables than go through such an ordeal. I don't think he can blame me for anything, but it would be pretty tough for a fellow to have to stand there with his hat off to hear himself praised."

However, he had not much time to think about it.

He saw that both the *St. Louis* and the *Yankee* were under way and heading for the mouth of the harbor, an order having been given while he was changing his clothes for the *Marblehead* and the gunboats to remain and shell the forts, and in a minute more he was in the captain's room, where Captain Goodrich sat by his open desk. He had hardly saluted before the captain opened the conversation in a way that surprised him.

"I see you are not afraid of powder, Standish. Do you speak Spanish?"

"Yes, sir," Gil answered, trying not to look as much astonished at the question as he felt.

"So I am told," the captain went on. "But I want to know how well you understand the language. Do you speak it fluently?"

The last sentence the captain asked in Spanish, and Gil smiled and immediately felt more at ease. The captain's accent showed that he had the Annapolis brand of Spanish, and he knew that his own knowledge of the language was far superior to that.

"Yes, sir," he replied in Spanish, "I speak it as readily as I speak English."

"Ah, I see you do!" the captain laughed. "You could carry on a conversation with a Cuban, using the idioms of the country, could you?"

"Yes, sir," Gil answered. "I know the idiom very well."

"So well that they would not take you for an American?"

"I know the idiom and the customs of the country so well, sir, that I think I could pass for a native," Gil replied.

"How would you like to undertake a dangerous mission on shore?" the captain suddenly asked, in a changed tone; "where you would be likely at any moment to get a bullet through you?"

"Very much indeed, sir!" Gil answered; and the fearless young American certainly spoke the truth.

Captain Goodrich sat for some moments drumming on the desk with his finger-tips.

"Of course you will understand," he continued at length, "that what I say to you is not to be repeated. I want a daring young man for such a service, and I shall select you. You will thus pass under the immediate orders of Commander McCalla, of the *Marblehead*, as his ship will remain on this station, while the *St. Louis* may go elsewhere at any time. He will give you your detailed instructions at the proper time; but you are the man for this work."

"Thank you, sir," Gil replied. And he considered a moment whether he was bound in honor to say more, and concluded that he was.

"I should like such work better than anything else, sir," he added; "but it is only fair to tell you that I never was in Cuba in my life. My uncle lived here for some years, and he taught me the language and customs of the people. But he took pains to teach me

thoroughly," he concluded, after a little pause, lest the captain might think he was trying to avoid the duty.

Again the captain drummed on his desk before speaking. "I think you are the man for the service," he said; and Gil was ready to jump for joy, though naval etiquette required that he should stand at attention.

"The only drawback that I see," the captain went on, "is your complexion. You are entirely too fair to pass for a Cuban. Darkened hands and face alone are not enough, for you may have to swim across streams, and your white skin would betray you. Artificial coloring answers very well in detective stories, but it would be useless in such work as this. However, the Cuban sun will do a great deal for you in a few hours. Have you a suit of bathing-tights?"

"Yes, sir," Gil answered.

"Well, wear them this afternoon instead of your clothes," the captain ordered, with a smile. "Stay out on deck in the sun, and let one of the stewards keep you wet with sea-water. Sun and sea-water will give you the tint of a quadroon in a few hours. You are relieved from other duty until further orders. I detach you for special service; and remember that it is a *secret* service. That is all."

With the naval salute and the naval sudden swing upon his heel, Gil retired from the captain's room, and returned to his own quarters. The *St. Louis*

was out of Guantanamo bay now, speeding westward along the coast toward Santiago.

The order to get not only his face and hands, but his body also, browned by the sun did not surprise him as much as it would have if he had known less about Cuban customs. If he was to pass for a Cuban boy, — particularly a Cuban country boy, — he knew he must be prepared to wear his shirt open at the throat and well rolled back, exposing much of his chest. His trousers, too, must be rolled nearly up to the knees; and an exhibition of fair skin in either place would instantly brand him as a newcomer.

"It's lucky I brought very sizable swimming-tights," he said to himself, as he made ready to don his new and airy costume. "They'll half cover me, anyhow. If they were the very small kind, the fellows would think I was going to give them some kind of a show."

It was well enough at first out on a sunny part of the deck, when the steward brought a pail of sea-water and a big sponge to wet him every few minutes. The crew were not backward about bathing whenever circumstances permitted; and it seemed natural enough that he should desire to wash off the remains of Clark's gore. But when the sponging went on time after time, the steward always wetting but never drying him, he began to attract attention.

"What are you up to, youngster?" Ben Hanway

asked, stopping in astonishment when he happened to pass. "You'd better get out of this sun, or you'll be burnt sore."

"Oh, it's all right," Gil laughed. "I never blister; I only get brown."

"Don't you, indeed!" Hanway retorted. "I guess you don't know this tropical sun as well as I do. You'll be laid up for a week it you stand here half an hour in that costume. Get something over your shoulders, anyhow."

Gil tried at first to laugh it off, and made excuse after excuse; but Hanway was too fond of him to let him blister himself. It was not till the third engineer threatened to summon help to force him into the shade, that Gil explained as far as he could.

"See here, Ben," he asked, "if the captain ordered you to get well sunburned and keep your mouth shut, what would you do?"

"Whew!" Ben whistled; "that's the way the land lies, is it? Why, I'd obey orders, whatever they were. And if he's given you such an order" (here he put his mouth close to Gil's ear and whispered), "he's going to send you ashore, and I wish I stood in your shoes. But there's this about it, Standish," he continued, in his ordinary tone; "it's a dangerous — a dangerous pres — what is it they call it? a dangerous president to set."

"Precedent?" Gil suggested.

"Yes, that's it; a dangerous precedent. If the cap-

tain can order us baked brown, he can order us bleached, or he may take a fancy to have us powder our faces and stick on a little rouge."

"Well, I think we'd make a very handsome crew that way!" Gil laughed. "It would be a heap easier than standing in the sun to be browned, anyhow. But don't you ask me any questions, old man, and I won't have to tell you that I can't talk."

All of the crew, however, were not so lenient with what they thought Gil's strange freak. One man came along with a rope's end and announced that he had been ordered to administer thirty-nine lashes for jumping overboard without orders, but that he would remit the punishment if Gil would instantly dance a hornpipe; and he actually did lay on two or three lightly before Gil could get hold of the rope. And two others said that if he was ready for a swim he'd better get into the water; and they picked him up as if to toss him overboard, and doubtless would have done it if the ship had not been under way.

"Miss Fanny Johnson will now give her great heel and toe act," a young gunner announced in passing, as he looked at Gil and laughed.

"Oh, no," Gil retorted. "John L. Sullivan will now give his great knockout act." And the muscles in his bare arms must have looked formidable, for the gunner broke into a run when Gil good-naturedly started for him.

These little familiarities, that were made possible by his unusual costume, were a positive relief to the young engineer. The necessary distinctions of rank on a naval ship were a little oppressive to one so sociably inclined as Gil. Among four hundred men crowded into the small space of a ship, he was almost alone. "One-quarter of the men," he often said to himself, "are above me in rank, and I cannot talk to them unless they speak first, the other three-quarters are below me, and it is contrary to custom for me to have much to do with them. If it wasn't for Ben Hanway, I might as well be on a desert island."

It was a relief, too, when the sun sank so low on the horizon that it was useless for him to remain longer on deck, and he was at liberty to go below and put on his customary clothes. The result was very gratifying to him in one sense, for in the few hours his skin had attained a tawny hue that he had hardly thought it capable of. He was right about his merely tanning under the sun instead of blistering as many thin-skinned people do; but even tanning under a Cuban sun is an unpleasant process, and every touch of his clothing gave him exquisite pain. However, he followed the old sailors' plan, to "bear it and look pleasant," and soon appeared on deck in his best uniform.

Captain Goodrich had left him very much in doubt as to what further orders he was to receive or when they were to come; but as the *Marblehead* was then

approaching from the direction of Guantanamo, he imagined that the orders might come soon, and that was why he took the precaution to put on his best uniform. If he had to board another ship, it must not be in his working clothes.

"They seem to feel very sure about what's going to happen in this war," Gil said to himself, revolving in his mind an idea that occurred to many Americans about that time. "They don't say 'the *Marblehead* will stay behind to engage the forts at Caimanera, and if she succeeds in destroying them she will rejoin the squadron in a few hours.' They put it more positively than that, and say that the *Marblehead* will stay and reduce the forts, and be with us again in a few hours. And here she comes, just according to programme, and it's dollars to farthings the forts are knocked to pieces."

It was nothing unusual to see one of the smaller boats lowered, for messages were constantly passing between the ships; but it did surprise Gil, after the *Marblehead* had taken up her position near by for the night, to be sent for by the chief engineer, and to hear the order, "Engineer Standish is to take the captain's gig at once and board the *Marblehead* and report to Commander McCalla, with this note from Captain Goodrich."

It was well then that he was prepared for such an errand; for how could he have kept the captain's gig

waiting, with its six men to row him in state to the *Marblehead?*

There were many points of naval etiquette that the young engineer knew nothing about, but where he lacked the knowledge his good sense carried him safely through. When, for instance, his boat was nearing the *Marblehead's* gangway and there came the sharp hail from the deck: —

"Ahoy, there! What boat is that?" he promptly answered: —

"A gig from the *St. Louis*, sir, with a messenger for Commander McCalla."

And when at the head of the gangway he found an officer waiting to receive him, he simply gave the usual salute and announced: —

"Engineer Standish, of the *St. Louis*, sir, with a message for Commander McCalla."

"Step this way, Engineer Standish," the officer replied, returning the salute; and in a minute more Gil was shown into the commander's room, and stood hat in hand before Commander McCalla, just as he had stood a few hours earlier before Captain Goodrich.

"Your captain has chosen you for a very dangerous service, Engineer Standish," the commander abruptly began, after reading the note that Gil handed him. "I suppose you understand that?"

"Yes, sir," Gil replied; "Captain Goodrich has told me what it is."

"And you —" the commander began again; but interrupted himself. "Standish, Standish," he repeated, turning again to the note. "Are you the *St. Louis* man who dived for the cable this morning?"

"Yes, sir," Gil answered, and had some thought of adding that he was in no more danger in the water than out of it; but he wisely concluded that the less he said, the better.

At this point the commander began to speak entirely in Spanish, and the young engineer made all his replies in that language.

"It is necessary," Commander McCalla said, in the sort of Spanish taught at Annapolis, and which Gil could understand, though he often felt like smiling at the remarkable pronunciation, "it is necessary that I should give you some idea of the naval situation; for when you go ashore you must know why you are there and what you are about. This is placing great confidence in you, and we expect you to repay it with the utmost fidelity and caution. That you are not wanting in courage you have already shown us."

"Thank you, sir," Gil replied, blushing a little through his new Cuban tan.

"A strong Spanish squadron, under Admiral Cervera," the commander went on, "has set out from Spain for this side of the Atlantic — the strongest fleet that Spain can produce, consisting of the *Pelayo*, the *Carlos V.*, *Oquendo*, *Vizcaya*, *Maria Teresa*, *Cristobal Colon*, and

four deep-sea torpedo boats. Of course you have heard of this, and you probably think, like the public in general, that these ships are coming to harass the American coast. But we in the navy know better than that. It is a fine fleet, but our own fleets are larger, better, and heavier, and they will not risk a battle with us if they can avoid it."

Several times the commander had stumbled over the Spanish words and stopped to correct himself, and with the next sentence he began to speak in English again.

"The Spanish believe that our first object is to capture Havana," he went on, "and the destination of Admiral Cervera's fleet is certainly Havana harbor, to add strength to the shore defences. It is now, according to our information, somewhere in the lower West Indies; and before trying to force our blockade at Havana it must put in at some friendly port for coal and repairs. Now our knowledge of the situation shows us that Cervera will make for Cienfuegos or Santiago, or else for San Juan, in Porto Rico. Each of these ports is well watched, and our business on this station is to watch the harbor of Santiago, and give instant notice of the enemy's approach.

"The belief is so strong that Cervera will try to enter Santiago," he went on, "that — and I must caution you again that the utmost secrecy is necessary in this matter — that the North Atlantic Squadron is now within four or five hours of us. Admiral Sampson left

Key West early yesterday morning, and the *New York*, the *Iowa*, the *Indiana*, *Terror*, *Amphitrite*, *Detroit*, *Montgomery*, *Porter*, *Wampatuck*, and *Niagara*, are at this moment in the Windward Passage."

It made Gil's heart thump to hear that this great American fleet was so near; but he answered simply, "Yes, sir."

"We believe, as it is our business to believe," the commander continued, "that Cervera will try to enter Santiago harbor; and if he does, the great naval battle of the war will doubtless be fought in this harbor. Therefore we must have the most complete information about the harbor and its defences, the troops in the vicinity, and the condition of the city and neighboring towns. And if the Spanish fleet enters the harbor, we must know the exact situation of each ship."

"I will do my best at it, sir," Gil asserted.

"Now as to your going ashore," the commander went on. "You must personate a young Cuban, and must have a reason for being there. You are to take a Cuban name, and have a plausible story ready for any one you talk with. You will dress like a Cuban, of course, and carry nothing along to betray you if you are suspected. You will not go ashore until to-morrow night, for you are not quite dark enough yet, and I want you to have another day in the sun. Yes," he added, smiling, "I know all about your sun-bath on deck. But I want you to choose your Cuban name

and invent your story to-night, so that all day to-morrow you can *think* yourself that Cuban boy, and act his part naturally, and forget for the time that you know a word of English or that you ever were an American sailor. The success of your mission and your own safety both depend upon this. That is all for to-night; and when I see you before your start, you will be a Cuban boy, with all your preparations made."

Gil saluted and retired, and had selected his new Cuban name before he was down the gangway.

CHAPTER XIII.

INSTRUCTIONS FROM COMMANDER McCALLA.

ON the day after the battle in Guantanamo bay there was a strong belief among the crew of the *St. Louis* that Engineer Standish, of the refrigerating plant, had lost his senses. And judging by his actions and his conversation, the belief certainly seemed to be well founded.

When Gil appeared on deck in the early morning wearing only the swimming-tights that he had worn the afternoon before, and stood in the sun beside a pail of sea-water, with a steward to keep him constantly wet with a big sponge, the men laughed at him and made him the victim of as many pranks as the ship's discipline allowed.

"Shure, his granddad was a naygur," said one of the Irish gunners. "The old man's just died, an' the bye's got to prove he's black blood in his veins, else he won't get his share of the fortune. That's why he's burnin' his skhin to a cinder in the soon."

But as the symptoms gradually grew worse, the joking ceased, and the men began to sympathize with

him. It was a serious matter when the young engineer refused to speak a word of his own language, but chattered Spanish in answer to their questions. And it was still worse when he would not answer to his own name or title, but insisted that he was a Cuban, and that his name was Pedro. And he was constantly saying something, they could not quite make out what, about going to Porto Rico.

"I'd rather see a lad shot," said one of the men, "than see him in such a state as that. He's crazy as a march hare; and it's this Cuban sun has done it, if I'm any judge; you want to keep out of the sun, fellows; it's a killer."

"I'm not so sure about the sun," said another; "it hasn't hurt me any. Maybe it was the excitement of the fight yesterday, and that dive he made under fire. He might have struck his head against something. Anyhow, he ought to be kept out of the sun, or he'll kill himself."

Ben Hanway, Gil's best friend on board, was the only one of the little circle who showed no concern. But so much talk about the crazy engineer made him curious to see what was going on, and he took the first opportunity to pay him a visit.

"Are you all right, my boy?" he asked in a low tone, sauntering carelessly up to where Gil was standing.

"Straight as a string!" Gil answered in Spanish,

and in the same low tone. "But I don't understand your language, señor. My name is Pedro Alvarez, and I'm in a heap of trouble."

"How so?" Hanway asked.

"Because I've got to get over to Porto Rico and I can't find any ship going that way," Gil explained. "You see my father, a Cuban like myself, was superintendent of La Flora sugar plantation, near Cienfuegos; and when the revolution broke out he became a captain in Garcia's army, and we sent my mother over to her relations in Porto Rico, because she'd be safer there. She's with them in Ponce, and we've had word that she is very sick. So as my father can't leave his men he has sent me down to the coast to find some ship that will carry me over to her to take care of her. You don't know of any ship going that way, do you, señor?"

"I think there may be an American fleet going that way before long," Hanway laughed. "But you'll find the way, Pedro Alvarez, and I'm glad you're all right."

Hanway was very useful that day in telling the crew that Standish was only obeying orders, however mysterious they might seem, for otherwise they would very likely have taken him forcibly out of the sun and confined him in his cabin. And he was a perfect treasure, as Gil declared in Spanish, when, the day ended, he willingly complied with Gil's request to go

with him to the latter's room and help transform him into the newest Cuban revolutionist, Pedro Alvarez.

What happened when they were alone together in the room, with the door locked, was sufficiently shown by Gil's changed appearance an hour later. If we know Ben Hanway as well as we ought, we know without the telling that he was too honorable to ask a single question about Gil's mission; and we can judge what it meant when Gil handed him his little private log-book, with some papers held between the covers by a rubber band, and said: —

"The address is in that; I know you won't fail to write, old fellow, if I don't come back."

What became of Gil Standish during that hour's work with Hanway would be a deep mystery if we were not in the secret. At any rate, when Ben went out, he left the room door standing open, and a few minutes later one of the captain's stewards stepped up to the open door, stuck in his head, opened his mouth to speak, but changed his mind, looked all about the room, and then fixed his eyes in astonishment upon a stranger who was coolly seated upon the sofa.

The stranger was a Cuban boy apparently about sixteen or seventeen years old. On his head was an old straw hat made of woven strips of palm leaf, much the worse for wear, with the top of the crown torn partly loose, permitting several straggling locks

of hair to stick through. His pink-and-white checked cotton shirt, with collar attached, was unbuttoned more than half-way down and well rolled back, exposing a large expanse of dark chest. And his only other garment was a pair of what had once been white linen trousers, coarse and unbleached at the best, but now wrinkled and soiled with long and hard usage. These fitted pretty snugly to his body, and were rolled up to the knees, displaying a pair of muscular calves as dark as a mulatto's and somewhat soiled besides, and feet that, destitute of either shoes or stockings, were as dark as bare Cuban feet usually are. His hands and face were even darker than the rest of the exposed skin, and his whole appearance indicated that he was a boy of the country, used to climbing the Cuban hills and braving the Cuban sun. A wrinkled old cloth coat, faded and torn, lay on the seat beside him.

As the steward was about to withdraw, Gil saw that he must break his rule and use his own language for once.

"What do you want?" he asked in English.

The steward's eyes opened wider than ever. It was Engineer Standish's room, and Engineer Standish's voice; but who was this Cuban boy?

"Captain Goodrich wishes to see Mr. Standish, sir," he answered.

"Very well," Gil said. "I will report in Mr. Standish's place."

Such of the crew as he met on the way were duly surprised to see a strange Cuban boy on board; but Gil did not wait for questions or explanations. He had a very brief talk with the captain, who merely wished to see that he was properly disguised before sending him to the *Marblehead;* and when the talk was ended he rang for one of his officers and gave the direction: —

"Take this boy over to the *Marblehead* and deliver him to Commander McCalla."

Once more closeted with the commander of the *Marblehead,* Gil had to undergo a careful scrutiny. The commander raised his glasses and smiled as he saw the wonderful transformation.

"Have you anything on but just what I can see?" he asked, in Spanish.

"Nothing at all, sir," Gil replied.

"Take off that coat and hand it to me."

Gil did as he was told; and as the commander opened it and looked at the place where the maker's name is usually put, at the back of the collar, he said to himself, "Oh, no; you don't catch me there." It was an American coat, but the New York maker's name had been carefully removed.

"What have you in your pockets?" the commander asked, returning the coat.

"Nothing but a handkerchief and a pocket knife, sir," Gil replied.

"No marks on the handkerchief?"

"No, sir."

"And the knife?"

"It is of German make, sir."

"Very well." The commander seemed well pleased. "Apparently you know what you are about. You must remember that if you are suspected you are likely to be searched from head to foot, even the linings of your clothes. So you are to make no drawings, and put nothing on paper. What is your name?"

"Pedro Alvarez, sir," Gil replied.

"Pedro Alvarez," the commander repeated, writing the name on his pad. "Then if we hear that Pedro Alvarez has been caught and shot, we will know who it is. And what are you doing in Cuba?"

"My mother is very sick in Ponce, Porto Rico," Gil answered, "and I have come down to the coast to find a ship to take me over to her." He repeated his story at some length, and was told that it would answer admirably.

"Now, Pedro Alvarez," the commander went on, "listen to what I tell you. Here is a small but a very powerful revolver, of English make, with a dozen extra cartridges. This is a water-tight bag it is in, in case you have to do any swimming, and you can carry it in your coat pocket. And here is money, in Spanish gold and silver. But not too much, for much money would look suspicious. Are you good at remembering names?"

"I think so, sir," Gil answered.

"You must remember this one," the commander continued, "for it is all-important to you. F. W. Ramsden, British consul at Santiago. F. W. Ramsden."

"F. W. Ramsden, British consul at Santiago," Gil repeated.

"Say it over to yourself a thousand times, if necessary, for you must not forget it. Now do you know the old Spanish proverb that would be in English, 'never sign a paper that you do not read, nor drink water that you do not examine'?"

"Ah, si, señor!" Gil answered. "'Ni firmes carta que no leas, ni hebes agua que no veas.'"

"Right!" said the commander. "Keep that in mind. Consul Ramsden is our friend and that proverb is our password with him. If you run out of money, or if you find yourself in the very last extremity from any cause, go or send to him. Mention no names; when you repeat the proverb he will understand.

"Now you are to remain on the *Marblehead* till late this evening," Commander McCalla continued. "After the moon sets I will send you down the coast in a steam launch. The launch will land you on the beach at or near Point de Berraco, about twenty-two miles east of here, and after that you will be left to your own resources. I shall not see you again, Standish," he added, after giving more detailed instructions, holding out his hand, "but I shall not forget you. This is dangerous

work you are undertaking, but it is of the utmost importance to the country. Good by, my boy, and God bless you."

It was not only the danger or the importance of his mission, not only the commander's warm handshake, that set Gil's heart to thumping so hard as he returned to the deck. He tried to think only of his work, but he could not help remembering that he was to be landed at Point de Berraco; and he knew that to reach Santiago from there he must go directly across the land that was once the Standish coffee plantation.

CHAPTER XIV.

GIL LANDS IN CUBA.

POINT DE BERRACO makes but a small projection on even the large maps of Cuba, but it offers a variety of landing-places to the voyager in a small boat, who may select smooth white beach, rocky headland, or the dark mazes of a mangrove swamp. In the bright starlight that followed the setting of the moon, Gil got a moderately good idea of the coast, and after some deliberation determined to make his landing in the most difficult and uncomfortable of the available places, the mangrove swamp. The beach would have been far easier, but he wisely reasoned that on the beach he might possibly be seen, and to be seen landing from an American launch would put an end to all his plans; whereas in the thick mangrove swamp he could lie concealed till it was safe to come out.

He was not a passenger of distinction on board the launch. To the officer in charge, as well as to the crew, he was simply a Cuban boy who was to be set ashore; but fortunately the officer had been directed to let his passenger choose his own landing-place, and Gil made him understand by signs that he desired to be set down

in the mangroves. He spoke no word of English while on the launch, and no one suspected that he understood what was said; so he had the pleasure of hearing what the men thought of him in his new character.

"Wants to land in the mangroves, does he!" one of the men said. "Well, that's a good place for a dago. I wish him luck among the snakes and alligators."

"You wouldn't catch him landing where anybody might see him," another laughed. "They're a cowardly set, these Cubans; worse than the Spaniards. Just imagine this measly dago diving under fire for a cable, like that fellow from the *St. Louis* launch. They haven't got the blood, that's a fact."

"This fellow's two-thirds negro," another broke in, "and they say they all are."

It pleased Gil wonderfully to hear these comments, for they showed that his disguise was effective. But he had little time to think about them. The launch's engine had been stopped when she reached shoal water, and she had been pushed along, slowly and silently, with poles. And at the proper moment her head was swung about and the stern was shoved in snug among the mangroves. Anxious to be rid of the boat as soon as possible, Gil instantly stepped out into water that barely reached his knees, and laid hold of a stout limb of the nearest tree.

"Gracios," he said, in a low voice. "Buena noches, señores." (Thank you; good night, gentlemen.)

"Good night, youngster," the officer replied, in the same low tone, "and pleasant dreams to you." And the boat shot away and Gil was left alone in the Cuban mud.

As nearly as he could judge the time, — for he had of course no watch, — it was about four o'clock in the morning. There were no signs yet of approaching daylight, but he knew that the sun would rise in the neighborhood of five, so that his imprisonment in the swamp would not probably last for more than an hour. And his situation was not as bad as it seemed, thanks to the attention he had given to his early instruction. Indeed, he knew so much about the mangrove and its habits that the darkness, the swamp, the weird shapes of the trunks and limbs, had no terrors for him. He was entirely familiar with its way of letting its curving branches dip into the water and embed themselves in the bottom to form new roots, which, growing like the parent stem, soon form a jungle that is next to impassable.

And suppose he could not make his way through the swamp when daylight came? Then it would be an easy matter to swim or wade around it to the firmer beach, for a mangrove swamp is rarely more than a fringe upon the shore. Snakes? Who ever heard of dangerous snakes in salt water? And alligators? The water was not deep enough for them. Even a braver fellow than Gil, ignorant of these things, might have been alarmed at his situation; but we are seldom afraid

of the things we understand, and having a good knowledge of the situation, he felt quite at his ease, and in the dim light he felt among the branches for a convenient seat, drew his feet out of the water, and made himself as comfortable as possible.

"It's a right lively little war — so far," he said to himself; "and I can't complain that I'm not getting my share. Five days out of New York this morning and twice under fire, one pretty sizable battle, and now one of the first Americans landed in Cuba.

"I'm glad the folks don't know where I am at this minute," he reflected, his thoughts wandering unbidden toward home. "If mother and Rose could see me sitting in this tree, and could know that I am going right into the enemy's camp, they'd worry. It was hard work not to write to them before starting, but I think it was best."

However, it is dangerous to begin translating a young sailor's thoughts in such a situation, when he can think enough in an hour to fill a volume; and it may be equally dangerous to tell the unvarnished truth, that when daylight came and the sun lifted his majestic head above the vapory horizon, Gil picked enough oysters from the trees to make him a substantial breakfast. If there had been chops or steaks or boiled eggs growing on the trees, he might have chosen another diet; but there was nothing but oysters, and he ate them and felt grateful.

Under the new light he slid down from his perch to examine the swamp, and his bare foot rubbed against something that scratched it. He stooped down to look, and saw that he had rubbed against a big cluster of oysters attached to an exposed root beneath the water. There were similar roots in every direction, and nearly every one of them had its cluster of oysters attached; some clusters made up of only four or five small oysters, others large enough to fill a peck measure.

"How that would surprise any one who didn't know about it," he said to himself, as he stooped down again and tried to pry one of the clusters loose. "I've often heard and read of oysters growing on trees, but I had forgotten all about them. And it's plain enough when you see it instead of hearing about it. These oysters certainly are growing on trees, but the story-tellers forgot to say they grow on the parts of the trees that are under water."

One bunch of oysters loosened served for a hammer to pound off others, and in a few minutes he made a very satisfactory breakfast. The oysters were small, but sweet and juicy. And as he ate he looked about him, and soon concluded that although the swamp was narrow, the growth of mangrove trees was so dense that the easiest way out would be by wading around it to the beach.

The sun was less than half an hour high when Pedro Alvarez, as Gil now not only called himself but tried

even to think himself, stepped out of the warm and shallow water upon the white beach of Cuba, where he was as much alone as if he had been the last inhabitant of the world.

The mangrove swamp was on his right, and back of it a rocky and inaccessible cliff. On his left, broad white beach as far as he could see, dotted here and there with broken rocks, and back of the beach a high and in some places a steep hill, ragged, rocky, partly overgrown with coarse grass and vines, looking much like the hills of his own Catskill region but for the bunches of cactus, green but forbidding, that stood here and there like sentinels. His eye commanded every part of the coast but the dark recesses of the mangrove swamp; and it was clear that his landing had been made unnoticed.

Now that he was safely on shore, with nothing to connect him with the American fleet, he had no further desire for concealment; on the contrary, he was anxious to meet some one, of any age, sex, or color, to give him information.

"It will hardly do," he realized as he began to climb the hill, "to pretend that I am looking for a ship on this desolate part of the coast. I think Pedro has been to Caimanera for that purpose, and failing there, is making his way to Santiago."

It was hard climbing on the hill, though in the part that he selected it was not very steep. He made a

comparison of it in his mind with Little Roundtop, near Cairo, which he had often climbed, and concluded that the summit was about four hundred feet above the sea-level. As he went higher and higher, his view of the sea grew larger; but what interested him more was the sight of a mountain range further inland, and apparently not many miles away.

From his experience among the Catskills he knew at once that the elevation he was climbing must be one of the foothills of the greater mountains beyond; and that the land must rise in hill after hill till the hills become spurs of the real mountain.

"The laws of nature are as binding in Cuba as elsewhere," he said to himself. "Between two hills there must be a valley; through that valley the people travel, so there must be a road. It is that road that I want to find, to lead me along toward Santiago."

When he reached the summit he found that this idea was correct in general, though so many other hills rose on all sides that there were too many valleys to choose among. As far as he could see, the country was entirely deserted; not a human being nor a human habitation nor the least sign of cultivation. The only thing to remind him that he was in the tropics, aside from the heat of the sun and the occasional cactus, was a beautiful grove of palm trees on the slope of a distant hill.

Following the downward slope of the landward side

of the hill, he came at length to a road; a typical Cuban road, worse than anything he had ever seen in the most neglected parts of the Catskills. For a Cuban road is merely a wagon track across the country, untended, unfenced, and sometimes impassable. Where the soil was rocky, this looked almost like the bed of a dried-up mountain stream; and where it was clay, the heavy wheels had cut into it for generations, and tropical winds had blown away the dust, till it was sometimes three or four feet lower than the surface.

At all events, it was a road, and he followed it to the westward for more than a mile; and presently as it curved around another hill, disclosing a new valley, he saw in the distance a house.

It was his first sight of the ordinary Cuban country house; and he stopped a moment to look at its odd shape. It was built of rough stones, with a roof of thatch, and composed evidently of two rooms, a single story high. But the rooms were separated by a space of fifteen or twenty feet, and the roof covered both the rooms and the space, forming a sort of covered piazza between — "a piazza with a room at each end," as he described it to himself. He was soon to become familiar with these open houses, but the first one was a novelty, and its surroundings, too, surprised him. In a country where he believed every dwelling to be embowered in dense tropical shrubbery, this one stood

exposed to every burning ray of the sun, without a tree or bush to relieve the glare.

The lonely house seemed to be deserted, but he would not pass it without inquiry. Going up to the open piazza, he found it floored, instead of with boards, with a rough cement of lime and pounded shells; and this same flooring extended into the rooms, of which both doors stood open.

There were no sashes to the small windows, only wooden shutters, and as these were all closed, the rooms were dark. So when he knocked at one of the doors, he could only get a dim idea, in the gloom, that the room was bare and deserted.

But he was rewarded by hearing an answer to his summons.

"What do you want?" he understood a distant voice to ask; a feeble cracked voice that he thought must belong to an infirm old woman; and it came evidently from the opposite room.

He stepped across to the other door, and looked in, and could barely distinguish, at first, the outlines of the bent form of an old woman. She was seated, as far as he could make out, upon some low, rough object, such as a log or a large stone.

"Buena diaz, señora," he said, taking off his tattered hat, meaning "good day, madam"; but it goes without saying that this, like all his subsequent conversations with natives, was carried on in the

Spanish language, which is here necessarily translated into English.

"Who are you?" the old woman asked, rising slowly and painfully from her seat, and stepping cautiously toward him.

"A stranger on this road, señora," he answered, "inquiring my way to Santiago."

"Then God keep you, stranger," she said, "for Cuba is full of plague and famine and worse enemies." (She used the native name for the city. Santiago de Cuba is frequently called Cuba by the inhabitants.) "Let me look at you."

As she stepped totteringly up to him, Gil saw by her wrinkled, half-closed eyes and her cautious movements that she was almost blind; and she proceeded to "see" him, after the manner of blind persons, by passing her shrivelled fingers lightly over his face and arms.

While he stood undergoing this process his eyes became better accustomed to the gloom, and he was startled to see that the room had another occupant. Close by the stone upon which the woman had been sitting was a disordered heap of dried grass, leaves, twigs, and boughs, and upon this rude couch a man lay stretched at full length. A man clad in soiled linen clothes, barefoot, with a broad blood-stained bandage around his head, and the deathly pallor in his face that comes only to the darkest skins. Like the woman, he was a mere skeleton, his ashy skin drawn tight over the

bones of his face. With closed eyes and perfectly rigid body, Gil could not determine whether it was a corpse or a dying man. He saw, however, that the room was bare save for the stone seat and the couch of leaves.

"Ah, it's a young lad," the old woman said, as she finished her examination, "and he must be a friend. An enemy would find little here to deprive us of, stranger, but our poor lives, and those are going fast enough."

As she spoke she groped her way out to the veranda, and across it to the front, where it was eight or ten inches higher than the ground, and there seated herself, inviting Gil to be seated also.

"This is the hospitality that is left to us, stranger," she said bitterly; and in the full light Gil saw evidences of refinement in her wrinkled face; and he was satisfied that, notwithstanding her decrepitude, she was not beyond sixty years old. Her infirmities came more from sorrow and suffering than from age.

"I did not look for even that, señora," he replied. "My only wish is to ask whether this road leads to Santiago."

"Where have you come from, lad?" the old woman suddenly asked, turning toward him.

"From Caimanera, señora," Gil answered, very truthfully; but as a scout in an enemy's country he need not add that he had been there in a hostile ship, shelling the forts and cutting the cables.

"And your name?" she asked.

"Pedro Alvarez," he answered.

"Oh, aye!" she exclaimed; "it is a good name. I have had many friends of that name in better times." And she began to tell of her friends in Santiago, and in Cienfuegos, and in Santa Clara, and might have gone on interminably if Gil had not skilfully changed the subject, and brought the conversation back to his own affairs.

He reasoned that this old woman was sure to see others, if only passing strangers like himself, and that in so desolate a country the presence of a stranger was sure to attract attention. It was better, he thought, if he was to be talked about at all, to be spoken of as Pedro Alvarez, the young Cuban who was trying to get to Porto Rico. And to this end he related to the old lady the story of his sick mother, and his anxiety to reach Ponce.

While he was talking, the woman drew from her pocket a large pouch, from which she took both tobacco and cigarette papers, and deftly rolled a cigarette with what seemed to be a single motion of her thumb and fingers. This she offered to Gil, but as he disliked tobacco in any form, and thought cigarettes the worst of all, he declined it with a smile, and she immediately put the end of it between her own shrivelled lips, and called: —

"Ramon! Ramon! Come here, lad, and bring me a light!"

Gil was startled at this, for he had seen no other person about the place but the wounded man. Could it be that she was calling that dead or dying man to get her a light?

His curiosity was soon satisfied, however, for in answer to the summons there came out of the inhabited room the emaciated remains of what had once been a boy. It was the most remarkable figure that Gil had ever seen. A boy of about fifteen he thought it must have been before it became an animated skeleton. It, or he, wore a single garment, and that a frayed coffee sack ripped open at one end, with a hole cut in the other end for his head to go through, and a smaller hole on each side for his arms. And such arms! Like his legs, they were to be compared with nothing but pieces of hoe-handle covered with dark skin. It seemed as if they must break when he moved them. His glossy, thick, straight black hair was the only attractive thing about him. His eyes, unnaturally bright, were sunken deep in his head. His cheeks were hollow, and his mouth, as in most cases of emaciation, was, or appeared to be, so large that it seemed to stretch from ear to ear. And his wasted limbs made his hands and feet look large enough for a giant.

This skeleton with tawny skin stretched tightly over the bones was Ramon, who must have been concealed somewhere in the room. He crossed the veranda and

went into the yard and knelt before a rude fireplace made of three stones, where a fire was smouldering, which he blew till he had a live coal, and carried it to the old lady in his hand by the simple expedient of first filling his hand with ashes. The old lady lighted her cigarette from it, and continued to smoke as long as the conversation lasted, lighting each fresh cigarette from the last.

"I think the Standish plantation is somewhere in this neighborhood, is it not?" Gil asked, when he had finished his story. "I once had a friend who lived there, and I should like to make inquiries about him."

"Ah, you will find no friends!" the old woman exclaimed, almost viciously. "We are past having friends in this poor island. All friends are scattered or dead, families are destroyed, fields trodden down, homes broken up, sons murdered, mothers starved. We are a ruined people. I hear the good Americans are coming to help us, but they are too late. Look in that room, and tell me what can help us.

"Going on two years," she went on, "we have lived in this dreadful place, Ramon and I, just as you see us now. And on what? On cassava that this poor lad plants and gathers with his own hands. That is our daily fare, and we are thankful for it, though it barely keeps us alive.

"But you asked about the Standish place," she broke off. "I knew it well. La Sierra we called it years

ago, before the Americans bought it. Ah, it was a bonny place, but the fields have been in ruins this many a day. You will pass it on your way to Santiago. Not by this road; this is the road to Aguadores, and you must leave it when you come to the track that you will see a little further on. That track, in a mile's walk, will bring you to the Santiago road. Then in about eight miles more you will reach the Standish place. Ramon shall go and show you where to turn off."

"You must take courage," Gil said, as he rose to go. "The Americans are here. Two days ago they destroyed the forts of Caimanera. Their ships are off this coast. We shall soon have help."

"Help!" the old woman repeated, "what help is there against death? When you come back this way, *he* will be there," and she nodded her head toward the room and pointed to the ground; "there, where his father and two brothers already are. They have murdered them all."

"He is your son?" Gil asked.

"My son," the old woman replied; "the last."

"And Ramon?"

"*His* son. May God be good to him and spare him, for he will soon be alone."

This painful scene made a great impression upon Gil. He had read of the sufferings of the Cubans, but this was the first that he had actually seen of it. The

"horrors of war" have a new meaning when they are brought home to us.

Ramon told him a great deal more on the way to the turning-place. They had never been wealthy, but had lived in great comfort on their own little plantation. The Spaniards had pillaged and burnt the house, the Cubans had trampled and destroyed the fields. Now they had scarcely more than our first parents in the garden of Eden. The old pan in which they cooked the cassava was their sole possession.

It was more than Gil could stand. Suppose his mother and Rose were reduced to such a living death. With moisture in his eyes he hurriedly tried to think what he could do for this starving boy. Everything was left behind, and he had nothing to give but money.

"Are you able to walk to Caimanera?" he asked, when they were about to part.

"Oh, yes, señor," Ramon replied; "but what use?"

"Take this," Gil told him, pressing one of his largest gold pieces into the boy's wasted hand; "go to Caimanera and get food, and bring a doctor to see your father."

Ramon's talon-like fingers clutched the coin as if he feared that it might fly away. It was like a starved beast pouncing suddenly upon food. Then his sunken eyes turned sadly toward Gil's face.

"God bless you forever," he said, making the sign of the cross upon his forehead. "But there is no food

in Caimanera, señor, and the doctors are all in the army."

Gil patted the starving boy upon the head, and without another word began his walk across to the Santiago road.

"It was not my money," he said to himself, "but I will have them take it out of my pay. And I shall have no more worry about travelling under false pretences. I did not like telling this story about the sick mother in Ponce and pretending to be a Cuban, though I am doing it under orders, and such things are done in all armies when nations are at war. But who could look at that awful sight and not say that we are fighting in a noble cause?"

CHAPTER XV.

BETRAYED BY THE SEÑORA.

WHEN the young scout reached the Santiago road, he found more evidences of former occupation. There were patches of land that had once been cultivated, and occasionally there was a small house; but these dwellings, apparently deserted, all stood far back from the road, some of them even on distant hillsides; and as he was sure of his way now he passed them by without stopping.

As the morning advanced, the heat grew more intense. When he turned into the Santiago road, it was, as nearly as he could reckon, a little after eight o'clock; and it was a wonderfully bright clear morning, that Saturday, the seventh of May. The road bore more signs of use than the by-way he had first been in; but not the usual marks of a country road, and when he examined it he found that there were no tracks made by wagon wheels, except the old tracks that had been washed by many rains; all the marks were footprints of men who wore shoes, and of horses. And he concluded from this that a large body of Spanish troops,

both horse and foot, had recently been taken over the road for the relief of Caimanera. The footprints all pointed in that direction, and they were so fresh he thought they must have been made within twelve hours.

Gil's plan was to reach the Standish place before eleven o'clock and rest there for an hour or two, eating his dinner there if he could find anything. He remembered that Commander McCalla had stated the distance of Point de Berraco from Santiago to be twenty-two miles. He had already come about two miles, so after walking eight miles to the Standish place he should still have twelve miles to go to reach Santiago, and that he thought he could readily do before dark. To reach Santiago, or at least the high hills to the eastward of it which overlooked the city and harbor and harbor entrance, he believed to be his first duty. Even the pleasure of looking at the plantation he was so much interested in, must not interfere with that. He had many things to do, but the most important of all was watching for the possible coming of Cervera's fleet.

With his coat over his arm he trudged along the lonely and dusty road. Walking in Cuba in May was like walking on the hottest August days at home, and as he sweltered and perspired he consoled himself with the thought that every minute was adding to his rich Cuban color.

There are no milestones on the Cuban roads, and he had no means of estimating the distance he travelled except by his rate of speed and the height of the sun. He tried to keep up a speed of four miles an hour, which is good fast walking, and he had gone, as he thought, about six miles, when a turn in the road around the base of a hill suddenly revealed several things of interest to him.

The prospect that opened out before him was much larger than any he had yet seen on the island. A great valley stretched out to the westward as far as he could see, ending at length in what he felt sure must be the hills on whose farther slope the city of Santiago stands. Smaller hills dotted the valley here and there, but none so situated as to obstruct the view. There were many more houses and fields in the valley than he had seen before, and several small villages.

But what immediately attracted his attention was a hill on the left, a long distance ahead of him, crowned by a large building that had once been colored a delicate pink, but that now was streaked and discolored with the dark signs of age and neglect. It was a very large building, two stories in height, except at one corner, where a large square tower rose to three stories, castellated at the top; and he might easily have mistaken it for a fort if that very building had not been described to him so often that he was familiar with every outline. Not only had it been described to him,

but he had seen photographs of it, and his uncle had often made diagrams showing the arrangement of the rooms. The end farthest from the tower seemed, as he saw it figured boldly against the clear blue sky, to have fallen or been battered into ruins; but notwithstanding that change he knew instantly that he was looking for the first time at the plantation house of the Standish coffee estate.

Clearly he was mistaken, then, in his estimate of the distance he had come. The large house seemed near by, but when he looked at the long series of minor hills and valleys that he must traverse to reach it, he knew that it could not be less than three or four miles away. But he had not much time to think of this, for the sound of childish voices close beside him told him that he must be near some inhabited dwelling.

On his left, less than a hundred yards away, was a fine cluster of palm trees, and in their shade stood a house much like the one inhabited by the old lady and the wounded man in its general shape, but larger, having two rooms on each side of the open veranda, and a small building in the rear, evidently a kitchen. The yard, which was surrounded by a low stone wall, was in strong contrast with the barren space in front of the other house. A smooth walk led down to the road, and on both sides of it were long beds of flowers. And scattered here and there were luxuriant clusters of graceful bamboos rising higher than the roof, of ole-

anders in bloom, of guavas, some orange trees white with their fragrant blossoms, and many strange plants that he did not know even by name.

It was more like his ideas of a tropical home than anything he had yet seen; and its beauty was enhanced in his eyes by two young children who were romping and shouting in the front yard. One was a little girl of perhaps eleven or twelve years, and the other a boy of about eight who, though scantily clad, as Cuban children always are, looked neat and clean in their white garments that were evidently fresh from the laundry. And better yet, they were so plump and hearty looking as to lead Gil to conclude on the instant that there was no lack of provisions in that house.

"Poor Ramon!" he said to himself. "While you are starving on your cassava, there is evidently plenty to eat not far from you."

Upon seeing the stranger approaching, the children stopped their play and seemed alarmed. After one good look at him they turned about and ran away, and he saw them a moment later peeking out from behind one of the clusters of bamboo.

He had had no intention of stopping till he reached the big plantation house; but it was a temptation to speak to the merry children and perhaps learn something about their source of supplies in such a devastated country; and when he was in front of the low wall he stepped up to it and called out to the girl: —

"Can you tell me how far it is to Santiago, señorita?"

On hearing his friendly voice and seeing that he was not a dangerous ogre come to eat them, the children came out from behind the bamboo, and timidly advanced a step or two.

"Nearly sixteen miles, señor," the girl answered.

"And do you and your little brother live in this pretty place?" he asked.

"Oh, *this* is not a pretty place!" the girl said, looking about contemptuously, and coming a few steps nearer the wall. "This is a mean little place. I hate it. But we live in a pretty place when we are not at war."

"Oh, you are at war, are you?" Gil laughed, at which both the children laughed too and took courage to step down to the wall and lean against it. "And are your papa and mamma staying here?"

"Mamma's here!" the boy replied, finding his tongue for the first time.

"And papa?" Gil asked.

The boy was about to answer again, when his sister pulled his sleeve to warn him to be silent.

"We are not to speak about our affairs to strangers, señor!" she said, drawing herself up with great dignity and speaking in the tone of a child who has been allowed to have her own way among a great many servants.

"Oh, excuse me!" Gil laughed again. "I did not know I was speaking to a princess of Spain. But per-

haps your royal highness will condescend to let an humble traveller have a glass of water from the palace well, the day being hot and the road dusty."

"We don't drink the water from this old well," the little boy exclaimed; "but if you come in, my mamma will give you a glass of wine."

The girl gave her brother another shake, and a look that Gil interpreted to mean, "You're always putting your foot in it, young chatterbox!" and said: —

"The water is very good, I believe, and I'm sure you are welcome to as much as you want of it. I don't see any one around to bring it, so you will have to step in and help yourself. We will show you the well."

It was a novelty to Gil to see a spoiled, haughty little girl like this. There are, fortunately, not a large number of them in our own country; but in Cuba, where every large planter is a little prince in his own dominions, and where there are necessarily large numbers of employees and servants, they are not at all uncommon. And he enjoyed talking, upon almost any terms, with the two children. It was so different from the scenes of war and destitution with which he was becoming familiar.

As he followed them up the path toward the house, he could not help noticing that nature had given even more than the dark hue of children of the tropics to the girl, and had made the boy as fair as a child of the mountain regions of upper New York. She would

have passed in America for a mulatto girl, with not only the dark skin but the rich brown eyes and wavy black hair of a mulatto, and he was as fair and white as a boy could be, with bluish-gray eyes and fair Saxon ringlets. Perhaps it was more on his own account that Gil noticed these things. They showed him that if he had not yet been sunburned enough, he might with almost any complexion pass for a native Cuban.

"Mamma, here is a — a person who is passing who wants a drink of water."

The girl's voice, as they neared the house, told him that he was to meet some of the adult occupants of the place. He saw no one, but the open veranda in the centre was so screened with vines that any number of persons might have sat upon it without his seeing them. It was the famous bougainvilliers vine that made the shelter; and though he had never seen one before, he knew it at once from his uncle's descriptions — a great growth of dark green foliage, forming a half-hidden background for the mass of bright crimson flowers.

"A stranger!" a voice from the veranda said. "We have not so many visitors that we can let one pass without showing him some hospitality. Good morning, señor."

A lady of less than middle age stepped up to the opening at the centre of the veranda, where the steps were. A lady in a costume of white, that made all the more conspicuous her jet-black hair. Gil rightly

judged that she was the mother of the children, and noticed on the instant that her complexion was about midway between the two. Oddly enough, too, for a boy, he noticed that her dress was severely plain, and that she wore no jewelry.

"Good morning, señora," he said, taking off his hat. "Thank you very much for your offer of hospitality. But there is nothing I should appreciate so much as a glass of water."

"There is plenty of water," the lady laughed, evidently pleased with Gil's politeness. "Plenty of water, such as it is. We are a little afraid of the strange water ourselves, but I suppose it is really pure enough, as there is nothing to contaminate it. But you need not drink it standing; let me at least offer you a chair."

From the steps Gil saw that there were several chairs upon the veranda, and very comfortable and inviting they looked, — chairs that were quite out of keeping with the character of the house, expensive chairs made of rattan in fancy and inviting shapes, one with rockers that the lady had just vacated. And there was a large rug upon the floor, the veranda being floored with broad boards instead of the composition flooring of the other house. It was as fine a rug as he had ever seen; and all the surroundings gave him the idea that these people could be staying only temporarily in so small and isolated a place.

He had had no intention of stopping longer than to take a drink of water, for the place that he was more interested in than any other on the island was within sight, and he was anxious to reach it. But he was warm, and the shady veranda looked cool and refreshing. He was tired, and the broad chairs were very inviting. It could do no harm for him to stop a moment and rest himself; and he took off his hat and ascended the steps.

"Call Auguey," the lady said to the little girl, "and tell him to bring this young gentleman a jug of water. And be seated, señor," she added to Gil, drawing one of the armchairs forward for him.

The young scout from the *St. Louis* was walking into trouble, though he had no suspicion of it. He was letting himself fall into the hands of a woman of great experience with humankind, to whom it was only amusement to win the confidence of a young country boy by refusing to see his bare feet and his coarse clothes; a woman who spent her winters usually in Paris, her summers in Saratoga or New York, who spoke English and French as fluently as her native Spanish, and who in ordinary times when she drove out in her volante was attended by a retinue of armed servants; the mistress, in short, of one of the greatest sugar estates of Cuba, an estate that in a good season sends fifteen thousand tons of sugar to market, and that gives profitable employment to an army of employees. There was

no reason, apparently, for her troubling herself with this barefoot boy walking past and asking for a glass of water, unless indeed because it was her whim, and because such Cuban ladies of fortune indulge their harmless whims without hesitation. Under the circumstances Gil could not have found a more dangerous person in the whole island of Cuba to hold any conversation with. But she was so hospitable and kind; so anxious to make him comfortable, and give him the rest he needed; so careful to put him at his ease and make him feel that she was talking to an equal rather than to some obscure boy from a neighboring plantation. How was the Catskill mountain boy to escape when she chose to draw him out?

Auguey brought the water, and he proved to be a light-colored young negro boy in very correct waiter's costume. And in five minutes Gil was ready to go; but by that time the lady had told him that she was the Señora Avila; that she and her family had taken refuge in that small place to escape the horrors of the war; and had encouraged him to tell as much of his own story as he thought proper.

And then he was sure that he must go, but she was so pressing in her invitation that he put it off a moment longer. She told him something of the history of the Standish place, finding that he was interested in it, and about the forts and garrisons in the neighborhood. There was so much information in what she said that

he felt that really he ought to stay and listen as a matter of duty.

The forts at El Caney she described, and the works on San Juan hill, and many other little strongholds about Santiago; and Gil very reasonably asked questions about them. How many troops were there at El Caney? how many at San Juan? at Santiago itself? And were the troops at Santiago mostly regulars or volunteers, and what artillery had they? and what were the coast defences besides the Morro Castle?

"It is impossible for you to think of going yet," she said, when at the end of half an hour he made one more move to start. "We are within a few minutes of our breakfast hour, and in this section there is nothing to be bought. We breakfast here upon the veranda, and you must not think of leaving us until you have eaten. But you shall not be kept waiting," she added. "Excuse me for a minute, and I will have something brought at once."

It would interfere a little with his plans, but could he not change them without slighting his real work? It might, after all, be the safest thing he could do, to eat something when it offered, in a country where provisions were so scarce. The raw oysters he had already eaten seemed to be just the right thing at the time, but they were a light foundation for a long walk over the Cuban roads; and at any rate, he could shorten his visit to the Standish place by just as much time as he spent over breakfast.

While he deliberated with himself, Auguey arrived with a small table, just big enough for four, and spread it with such a tempting array of food as no hungry young sailor could have resisted. A silver pot of steaming coffee, and hot rolls, fresh fish, chops, eggs, and a Cuban dish that he had heard of before, called bacalao, made of salted codfish, fresh tomatoes, and a liberal sprinkling of garlic.

Such a meal, in such a shady spot, in such good company, was enough to brighten the heart and loosen the tongue of any young man. The children were talkative, and their mother seemed to encourage them to prattle. The conversation was all about Cuba and military affairs, and the hostess poured out a perfect stream of information, or what passed for information, about troops and batteries and mined harbors. And Gil asked as many questions about such matters as the most talkative hostess could desire, without stopping to consider that perhaps he was asking too many for his own safety. The more he asked, the more engaging his hostess became; and nothing was further from his thoughts than that so charming a woman could be deliberately leading him on to his own ruin.

"Ah," she said, when the meal was finished and Gil showed signs again of departing, "not immediately after eating. Being a Cuban yourself, you know that in this country we take our siesta after a meal. It is not well to go out into the hot sun too soon."

Just a suspicion flashed across his mind that for some reason she was trying to detain him. But he dismissed it instantly as absurd.

Gil was always very careful about the little proprieties of life, and his good sense told him that even under such circumstances it was hardly polite for him to take his departure the minute he had finished eating. He would sit and talk for a few minutes.

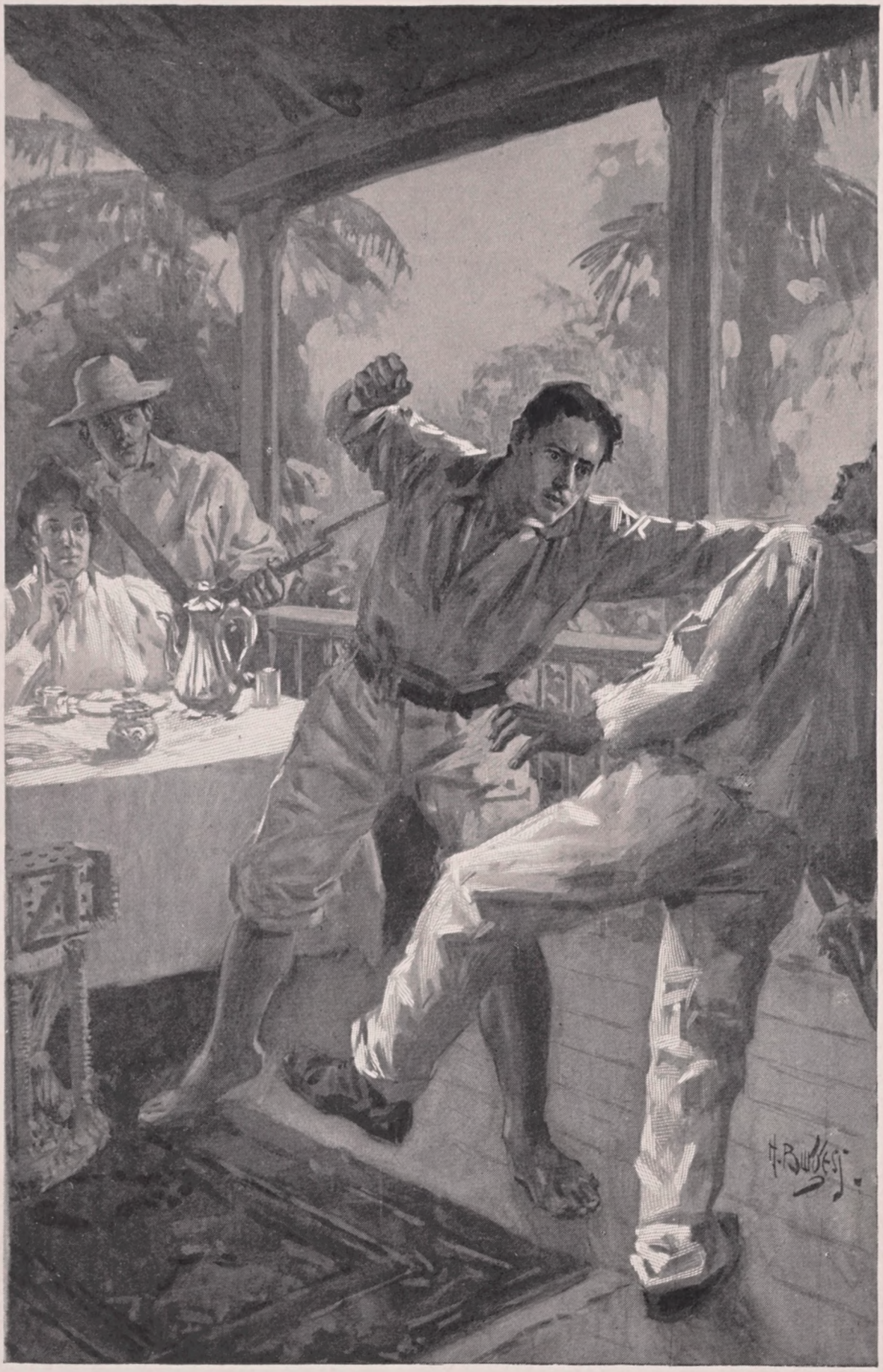
He heard a back gate open and close, and knew that some one was approaching the house from that direction. But there were servants about the place, who must frequently be going in and out, and he thought nothing of it till a change in the sound brought him to attention instantly. There were footsteps of more persons than one on the rear of the veranda; and they were not the steps of servants, for they were too heavy, and they kept time with military precision.

His back was turned in that direction, and as he instinctively looked around he quickly sprang to his feet; for there were two armed men on the veranda, both in the Spanish uniform.

Each carried a long rifle, with bayonet affixed; and as they were advancing rapidly, one of them stepped up to Gil, who was hampered by the chair and table, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"You are my prisoner," he said.

It is surprising how many things a man can think of in such a moment. Both the men were smaller and



WITH A POWERFUL BLOW HE SENT THE SPANIARD REELING.

lighter than Gil; he saw that in a flash. And their long rifles were the clumsiest of weapons at such close quarters. And there was a smile upon the face of his hostess that told him a great deal; and he had no time to get out his revolver.

"Oh, I think not," he retorted.

As he spoke he threw off the Spaniard's hand, and clutched him by the throat. The scuffle that followed took them half-way across the veranda, but it could have only one ending. Gil was a young lion aroused, and the soldier was a mere child in his hands.

With a powerful blow he sent the Spaniard reeling up against the wall of the house. Then turned quickly, for the other man was coming around the table to attack him in the rear.

Gil made a desperate rush for this second man, but to reach him he had to pass his hostess, who still sat smiling and unconcerned. And as he shot past her with all the momentum he could give himself, she deliberately thrust out her foot and tripped him.

There was no time to think of the awful breach of hospitality, for his head struck a corner of the table, and he remembered nothing beyond seeing a great collection of stars falling through the veranda roof.

When he came to his senses, his hostess and the children had disappeared, and he was seated in the

rocking-chair with both the Spanish soldiers standing over him, and a pair of glittering steel handcuffs on his wrists.

"You are quite a fighter, señor," the leader of the two said, when Gil looked up; "but you must come with us."

CHAPTER XVI.

GIL ESCAPES FROM HIS CAPTORS.

WITH manacles on his wrists and two armed soldiers taking him in charge, there was little that Gil could do but obey when they ordered him to get up and march.

"What have you taken me prisoner for?" he asked, as they walked rapidly across a vast abandoned field toward one of the interior hills.

"On suspicion, señor," the man who was evidently the leader answered. Gil was satisfied from their uniforms that neither was a commissioned officer. The spokesman, he thought, might be a corporal or sergeant. And this point made an impression upon him, for he was still thinking very hard.

"Suspicion of what?"

"Ah," the man replied, shrugging his shoulders, "that is not for me to say. There is much suspicion in this unsettled country."

"Then the lady I ate breakfast with has made a false charge against me," Gil continued. "She sent for you to come and arrest me?"

"She is a very powerful lady, señor," the man answered evasively. "She is the colonel's wife."

Gil was afraid of betraying himself by asking too much; but this could only mean, he was sure, that the lady was a Spaniard, or in sympathy with the Spaniards, and her husband in the royal army.

"And where are you taking me?" he asked.

"To the outpost on Carillo hill first, where we are on duty," the man replied; "and from there, who knows? wherever you are sent." And he shrugged his shoulders expressively.

Gil certainly had every reason in the world for doing his very best thinking now. He could not make up his mind that he had been exactly remiss in his duty. To stop and eat breakfast with a family who treated him kindly was no fault, and he knew that he had not been unguarded in his conversation. It was not what he had said, but the many questions he had asked, that aroused suspicion.

"And after all my careful preparations!" he said to himself; "the tanning in the sun, and these old clothes, to be suspected on my very first day ashore! A fellow would never have thought that any person, specially a woman, could have made such a vile use of pretended hospitality. She must have sent for the soldiers, of course, when she pretended to go out to order breakfast.

"But Captain Goodrich and Commander McCalla,"

he continued, "will not stop long to inquire how I got into the scrape. It's enough that I am in it, and not able to get them the information they want. I must find a way out of it, or they will never trust me on any important work again — even," he added, with a poor imitation of a silent laugh, "if the Spaniards don't take a notion to put some bullets into me."

They were walking along in single file, the spokesman in the lead, Gil in the middle, and the other soldier bringing up the rear. And it is not probable that either of the Spaniards had the faintest suspicion that their young prisoner, apparently so helpless and crestfallen, was then revolving in his mind the important question, for them, whether or not they should be allowed to reach their post alive.

That, indeed, was what it came to as soon as he fairly considered the subject of escape. If they once got him into a prison, he knew the chance of escape would be almost gone. Even when they reached the outpost it would be much more difficult. There was no time like the present, when he had only these two small men to cope with.

Gil himself was quite startled when it first flashed upon him that he had the lives of his captors completely in his hands. He was so sure of it at any rate that he did not ask himself whether he could do it, but whether he should free himself in that way.

The chief of the two soldiers, who led the way, showed

no inclination to look around at his captive. He was willing enough to answer questions, but without pausing in his walk, and usually with no gesture but a shrug of his shoulders.

Gil did not look around much either, but he knew by the sound that the other man was two or three paces behind him. This man in the rear, however, could not see through Gil's body, and had no means of knowing what happened immediately in front of him. And it was in his hands, which were of course in front of him, that Gil was most interested at the moment.

He knew that to make a break for freedom he must have his hands loose, and one or two little tugs at the handcuffs had convinced him that he could easily release himself. Though bright and new, they were of an old-fashioned pattern that never could be made to fit snugly, and he had often noticed in his boyish games that while his wrists were large and strong, his hands were so small that they would easily pull through any moderate fastening that encircled his wrists.

That was what gave him such confidence in his ability to escape. On first reaching the beach in the morning he had taken the precaution to remove his revolver from the water-tight bag, and it lay ready for instant use in his coat pocket. And he had slipped on the coat as he walked up the path to the lady's house, so he was prepared for quick action. He made a pretence of wiping his face with his handkerchief, and found that his

hands would slip through the steel wristlets with very little trouble.

"I can get rid of the handcuffs without attracting attention," he reflected, "and it is a second's work to dispose of the man in front. Before the rear man can raise his rifle he will be down too, or at least under cover of my pistol. He cannot handle his awkward gun as I can my little revolver."

But — ! a very large and powerful but sprang into Gil's mind as he laid this plan. It would not be enough merely to disable these men. They must be killed outright, because being soldiers they might be transferred to any part of the island, and he should be in constant danger of meeting them — a danger that he hardly feared from the lady, who would be more likely to stay at home.

And what would such cold-blooded killing be? To be sure, their respective countries were at war, and there is no war without killing. But these men had treated him as kindly as they could, and they were only doing their duty, and such shooting without a moment's warning was very different from shooting in the excitement of battle. Then, on the other hand, there was his duty to his country. The country was in need of information which probably he could not get without killing these men. Was it therefore his duty to kill them for his country's sake, leaving his own safety entirely out of the question?

It was a terribly hard thing for him to draw the line in just the right place between his duty to his country and his duty to his own conscience. "Some time I may be telling mother the story of my capture," he thought, "and she will ask me what became of the two men. Can I look her in the face and tell her, 'I killed them both!' On the other hand, what officer in the navy would not laugh at me if I were to hesitate?"

Several times his hand was in his pocket fingering the butt of the revolver; more than once the handcuffs were slipped half-way off, and both those unsuspecting men were within a hair's-breadth of eternity. But we are not left always to decide these difficult questions for ourselves; sometimes help comes so unexpectedly that it is enough to make us stop and think even harder than Gil was thinking that morning.

The man in front suddenly showed fresh signs of animation. He did not look back; it was something ahead of him that attracted his attention. He threw up his free hand that was not carrying the rifle, and whistled, and called out, "Come, Toros; come, old fellow!" and Gil saw a large dog bounding joyfully down the path to meet them.

It was something of the shepherd breed, but so emaciated that it was pitiful to see. It soon reached the little party, however, and sprang lovingly upon the leading man, barking with glee, resting its front paws upon his chest, and licking his hands. And the man

patted it upon the head, and hugged it, and seemed so pleased himself, that Gil instantly concluded that the dog was the soldier's pet, and had followed him on his errand, but had been ordered to wait at some distance from the house.

"Are you so glad to see your master again, Toros?" the man asked, patting the dog's head. "And so hungry? Ah, but that's an old story, for we're all hungry. If you don't have enough to keep a cat alive, why, neither does your master, old chap. There was plenty where we've just been, I'll warrant; but not for you and me, old Toros. Not had a bite to-day? Is that what you're trying to tell me, comrade? Well, now, no more have I. But we'll have something now, Toros; we'll sit right down here and do the best we can. You know the rules, Toros — share and share alike. You can always have half of mine; but I can't give you the whole, or you'd soon have no master."

All this time the dog had been frisking about like mad, and jumping upon his master; but when the two men sat down upon the ground, with their guns by their sides and Gil seated between them, Toros knew what to expect and sat down facing them, his tail beating the ground furiously, and a look of intense expectancy in his thin face.

Each of the soldiers took the half of a small loaf of very black bread from his pocket — such dry, coarse-looking bread as Gil had never seen before; and his

brief military experience told him that that was a day's rations for each man. The pieces were so exactly alike, in shape as well as in repulsiveness, that they might have been the two halves of the same loaf.

Both men got out their worn pocket knives, and, after the continental peasant fashion, cut into the bread. Knowing this to be their entire store for the day, Gil watched them with great interest. He was not surprised to see each man cut his half-loaf into two exactly equal parts, for half must serve for a later meal. But he soon learned better than that. The man with the dog laid one of the halves in his lap, and sliced the other half and fed it to the hungry dog before taking a bite himself.

And the other soldier? The other man, the quiet little man who had trudged behind, meanwhile drove the point of his knife into one of his two portions, and with as much politeness as he could command, held it out for Gil, saying: —

"Eat, señor; you are very welcome."

For an instant the captive was less polite than his Spanish captor; for he was taken by surprise, and he hesitated to look him in the face.

"These starving men," he thought, "are sharing their last poor crust with their dog and with me; and a minute ago I was thinking of killing them both!"

In a moment he recovered himself, and with many

thanks broke off a small piece of the bread and began to eat, not wishing to offend by refusing. And he felt doubly thankful, for the very thing that had made it impossible for him to think longer of killing, had shown him how he could probably escape in a much more satisfactory way.

Both men ate as if there was nothing in the world so good as that hard black bread, and both urged him to eat more with them. And Gil had no desire for more food, but he ate a little for the companionship, and soon had them engaged in conversation.

It was a dreadful thing, he said, that the whole island was in such a starving condition, and the poor soldiers worst of all. And when they agreed with him, he expressed his sorrow that they had been put to so much trouble on his account, specially as it was all a mistake, and the commanding officer could do nothing but set him free.

But maybe it was a good thing, after all, he went on, for he had found out that they were remarkably clever fellows; and if they liked to save themselves the trouble of taking him on to the outpost, but could invent some way of letting him escape without getting into trouble themselves, he had it in his power to provide them both with a week of as good feeding as could be had on the island.

"Why," said he, seeing that his words made some impression upon them, "I didn't try to escape, you

know, after the first little brush we had; it was easier just to let the officers set me free. But I could have done it at any minute. Look here."

He raised his manacled hands as he spoke, and with scarcely an effort released them both from the steel bands.

The men laughed, for their prisoner made no effort to get up, and they were both interested in what he had said about food. And Gil had not pulled off the handcuffs without an object; he immediately thrust one of his freed hands into his trousers pocket, as he could not have done when they were manacled, and felt carefully about till his fingers held two bright gold pieces, which he held up before their eyes.

"You know what that means," he said; "one of those for each of you, and nothing to do but just sit still here for ten minutes."

The conversation that followed that was not long-drawn-out. But if the officers of the outpost on the hill had been watching with a glass, a few minutes later, they might have seen what they must have thought one of the most daring escapes ever made from a pair of Spanish soldiers.

A young prisoner had thrown off his manacles, and was flying across the country like a deer, bravely followed by two infantrymen with rifles, who were apparently running at the top of their speed, except when they paused long enough to send a few bullets after

the fugitive. And the flying prisoner was gaining, and would escape unless a bullet brought him down.

How were those officers who might have been watching to know that the soldiers had told their prisoner just what direction to take to avoid danger, or that they were taking great pains to shoot often without hitting anything?

It was a long, stubborn chase, to all appearances; and when Gil stopped running, more than four miles from the scene of his daring escape, his pursuers were out of sight.

"Dreadful bribery, that," he panted, in snug concealment among the giant limbs of a great ceiba tree; "but much better than killing them."

CHAPTER XVII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

"YOU must keep your wits about you, and be governed always by circumstances." That was one of the things, Gil remembered, that Commander McCalla had said to him; and he was satisfied, as he lay panting among the huge limbs of the ceiba tree, that it was excellent advice. Any plan that he had been ordered to follow blindly must certainly have brought him into trouble.

He must be governed by circumstances; and present circumstances seemed to demand that he should make a sudden change in his plans. On his first day in Cuba he had been, if not discovered, at least suspected, and that would not do; and suspected by a lady who had the means and very likely the inclination to have him followed when she heard of his escape. Instead of priding himself upon his easy escape, he covered himself with blame for having been captured.

"If I hadn't got into the scrape," he said to himself, "I'd have had no need to get out of it. It's

a good lesson for me, of course, and I shall profit by it. The trouble is, in this delicate profession I am following, a fellow is liable to lose his head with the first lesson he misses."

It was plain that he must give up all thought of seeing the Standish place at present. It would never do to be loitering about within a few miles of that dangerous Spanish woman, and of the outpost, which might send a new guard after him almost immediately. Many of his minor arrangements must be changed on the spot; but the one main point remained unaltered, that he must get to or near Santiago without another moment's delay, to give immediate information about the position of each ship, in case of the arrival of Cervera's fleet. All other things were insignificant compared with that.

In a few minutes he was able to breathe regularly again after his long run, and as there were no signs of any further pursuit he let himself gently down from his perch. He was far away now from the Santiago road, which at any rate he thought it was better for him to avoid until he had a chance to make some changes in his appearance. If he did not happen upon any by-roads, it would be no great hardship to walk the remaining distance across fields or through the occasional forests.

The position of the sun satisfied him that the time was barely past noon, or at the most one o'clock, and his distance from Santiago he estimated at fourteen

miles — for in his diagonal run across country in escaping from the soldiers he must have gained fully two miles toward the west. Fourteen miles he could walk in three and a half hours, and he could still reach Santiago before five o'clock, if he met with no further adventures.

It is no breach of confidence to say that the young scout proceeded now with much greater caution than before. Instead of going boldly along, anxious to meet people of whom he might ask questions, he took pains to meet no one at all, knowing that to talk with a native might be to put pursuers upon his track.

He had run well out of the large open field, but the ground was still unobstructed except for many palm trees growing singly, and some clusters of that most beautiful of Cuban growths, the groups generally having a mass of thick foliage beneath them, good for both shade and shelter. He took the Indian plan of going from one of these groups to another as rapidly as possible, pausing a moment at each to look about for pursuers or even casual travellers. The Standish place was still in plain sight, much nearer, indeed, than when he had first seen it; but his progress was rapid, and in a short time it lay between him and the sea, and in less than an hour he had left it behind.

When he had traversed five or six miles in this way, carefully avoiding the dwelling-houses, which became more numerous as he advanced, a turn in the valley

through which he went brought him suddenly upon a road. He rightly conjectured that this must lead to Santiago, and he knew that as he neared the city he could not avoid meeting people. To postpone that danger as long as possible, however, he kept out of the road, but followed its course at a safe distance across the country, and after another hour he began to think that he must soon come upon the suburbs of the city.

Having walked sixteen or eighteen miles since sunrise, without any sleep the night before, he began to feel jaded; but he was still determined to reach his destination before resting, and he was in hopes of ending his journey in another hour, when from a little rise in the land he saw a considerable village lying directly in front of him.

This was an unpleasant surprise, for he had no knowledge of the existence of such a place; and he immediately turned sharply to the south to avoid it, crossing the road and making a wide detour.

"There was no such village on any of the maps of Santiago I have seen," he said to himself. "It must be a very insignificant place."

And so it was at that time. Not being a prophet, he could not foresee that in less than two months the whole world would be familiar with the name of that little place. In making his detour to avoid danger he was going directly between two points soon to become

famous in American history, and within easy rifle-shot of either, — El Caney and San Juan hill.

He soon saw, however, that after circling around the village he must make his way back to the road, which seemed to be the main highway into the city. He could not see the city yet, but knew it must be just beyond the hills in front of him, and he would be less likely to attract attention in following the road than if he were seen crossing the fields.

The sun still had two or three more hours' work to do, which meant that it must be between four and five o'clock, when Gil joined the stragglers who were travelling in both directions on the Santiago road. Holding no conversation with any of them, beyond giving civil answers several times when questions were asked him, he was soon on the summit of the eastern hills, and the strange old city of Santiago and its beautiful harbor lay before him.

Other people were stopping to look at the extensive view, so it would attract no attention for him to do the same.

"Ah, señor," said one grizzled old man who stood near him, leaning heavily upon a rough cane, "these are sad times for our poor old city!"

"Sad, indeed, señor!" he answered, thinking that no answer could be safer than that. But he did not, nevertheless, lift his eyes from the harbor, every foot of which, at the base of the steep slope, was within his

range — every foot, that is, except the narrow entrance past Morro Castle, with its precipitous sides.

"No signs of any Spanish fleet there!" he said to himself, with almost a sigh of relief. "It would have been a pull to have to locate the ships and make my way back to my own ship to-night after this long walk; but I'd have managed it somehow. Plenty of steamers and sailing-vessels here, too; but they're merchantmen, not warships — got in here to escape from our fleets, of course."

He saw that he still had a long walk before him to reach the heart of the town, which must be down by the water. The few houses that now dotted the road-side were small and mean, and many of them deserted and going to ruin.

"There is almost sure to be a military post somewhere on the road," he reflected, "and I shall do best by being with other people." So he stayed among the fifteen or twenty others who were going in the same direction.

He was in the Camino del Caney, which in plain English means El Caney road. And he had done better for himself and his country than he knew, for it is one of the main thoroughfares into Santiago, though rough and dirty enough, paved with uneven stones and narrow as a lane, without any pretence of sidewalks. The state of the road was nothing to him, but in circling around El Caney he had uncon-

sciously avoided the Canoso fort and its strict guard of the road. Once past El Caney, as he now was, he was free to enter the city without challenge. But if the morning's adventure had not taught him caution, he would almost certainly have fallen into the hands of the Spanish guard.

Now he began to make his way into and across the city. The small scattered houses became even fewer, for he was still well in the outskirts, and he was startled in a moment to find that he was passing the big barracks, the Cuartel de Concha, where the broad grounds were sprinkled with soldiers. But no one was challenged or stopped, and the people passed unconcernedly by. Then he came to another open space, cemetery on one side and market on the other; and beyond that the road broke into three or four broad streets.

He chose the street on the right, the one passing the Viejo cemetery and a strange-looking old church, which led him into still another, called, as a sign informed him, the Calle Alta de San Geronimo. Presently there was a sharp hitch in the street, and although it seemed still to be the same street, the signs called it Calle Baja de San Geronimo. There was nothing puzzling to Gil in the names, for he knew that they meant simply upper St. Geronimo Street and lower St. Geronimo Street. He was nearing the harbor; and with every step there were more people in sight, and the buildings were better and more compact.

At a quarter of six o'clock exactly, he stood at the corner of lower St. Geronimo Street and a broad thoroughfare called Calle de la Factoria, and felt that one part of his mission, at any rate, was accomplished; he had safely entered the blockaded city of Santiago de Cuba.

No trouble to tell the time now. He was in the heart of the city, and the streets were full of people who seemed to care nothing about the war, and clocks were plenty — there was one indeed in the window of the jeweller's shop in front of which he stood.

Looking further down the street, he saw that he was only two blocks from the harbor. And looking about him at the people, he saw that most of them looked very much as they must have looked before the war began. Some, to be sure, were ragged, emaciated, and worn; but there were plenty of exquisites in fine clothes, and solid business men looking comfortable and well fed, and even a few fine ladies passing in carriages. The affairs of the city were, to all appearance, moving along much as in times of peace.

Having satisfied himself upon that point, Gil stood on the corner for ten minutes longer, watching the fashions. He never in his life before had taken any interest in the fashions, but now it was a very important matter for him, for he was about to take a step that required great care. He had done a heap of thinking since his escape from the Spanish soldiers,

and as a result there had been some wonderful changes in his family affairs — not his real family, but the imaginary family of which he was trying to believe himself a member.

The sick mother in Porto Rico had either died or recovered during his long walk to Santiago; at any rate, he took no more interest in her. She must be cruelly deserted by her son in her hour of need, because he had given that account of himself to the inhospitable Spanish lady, and if he used it again and she tried to trace him, it would give her too ready a clew. That was one of the things he had thought out.

And it was his intention that the Cuban country boy in the bare feet and the ragged straw hat should within an hour disappear utterly from the face of the earth. That, too, he had decided upon, and it was that which had kept him walking across Santiago till he came to a street full of retail stores. He knew just what kind of a person was to take the country boy's place; but even with money in your pocket it is a delicate, and sometimes a dangerous, matter for a man to change his appearance completely, specially in a strange place, and one where all strangers must be looked upon with suspicion. So he set about it very cautiously, knowing that, tired as he was, his day's work was not yet nearly done.

Having satisfied himself about the fashions, he walked carelessly through several blocks till he came

to a gentlemen's furnishing store; and there, knowing just what he wanted, he went in.

"I should like to have a pair of stockings," he said to the dark young clerk.

It did not take him long to learn that judged by the Cuban standard he was blessed with very large feet. He had always thought them rather small and neat, but the Cubans are as small in their feet as in the rest of their bodies, and the clerk had to search through many boxes before he found stockings large enough. They were found at length, however, and bought, and he went out carrying in his coat pocket the first link in the new chain he was forging.

Then he found a shoe store and went in; and there he had vastly more difficulty than with the stockings. He knew by his uncle's telling of the ridiculous shape of Cuban shoes, but he never imagined them *quite* as bad as the reality proved. Having drawn on the stockings, he examined pair after pair of shoes as the clerk brought them; but they were not only much too small, but too high and narrow in the heel, too highly arched in the instep.

Both he and the clerk smiled as pair after pair proved to be far too small; but at length the clerk remembered a single pair that had stood in the shop so long that they were covered with dust.

"I think they will be just the thing for you," the clerk said, as he cleaned them with a feather brush.

"They were made to order for an English captain who did not call for them."

They were indeed just what Gil wanted; a rational pair of Oxford ties made of soft kid, with broad low heels and square toes; and he was delighted to find that they fitted him very comfortably. They looked neat and tidy over the new black stockings; and as he rolled down his trousers to their full length he felt that he had made a long step toward becoming a civilized young man again.

His next venture was into a hat store, where he exchanged his tattered old straw for another straw of such fine and tough texture that the clerk rolled it into a cylinder to show that it was indestructible. Its color was nearly white, its brim much broader than the other, and its only ornament was a very narrow band of black ribbon. It was precisely such a hat as he had seen some of the best-dressed men wearing in the street; and when he put it upon his head and stood before the big mirror in the shop, he was forced to smile to see what a change the hat and shoes made in his appearance. With his coat well buttoned up, he was a very presentable young man already.

But the transformation was only half made. The experience of the morning had made him far too cautious to buy his entire outfit in any one place, as he might easily have done. To go into a shop a country boy, and come out a well-dressed young man, would

naturally arouse the shopman's curiosity, and might put the authorities upon his track.

It was much safer to make his changes gradually, as he was doing; and within the next half-hour he had visited a different furnishing store, where he had bought a fine linen shirt, with cuffs and collar attached, and a gauzy flowing silk tie of dark blue, both of which he had put on.

With these evidences of comfortable circumstances, he was ready for the tailors; but in the first shop he went no further than the trousers and vest. He soon replaced his coarse lower garments with a pair of fine duck, with vest to match, of a light buff color; and in another shop he exchanged his faded coat for a fine garment of thin black diagonal cloth, saying in each place that the old articles were to be kept until he sent for them.

The new coat was pretty nearly the last straw, with the few contents of his pockets carefully transferred from the old clothes to the new. Almost, but not quite. He had noticed that nearly every gentleman in the streets carried a very thin light cane; and as a number of these were offered for sale where he bought the coat, he bought one.

"Can you tell me," he asked the tailor, thinking his transformation as complete now as he could make it, "of a good café near by? A restaurant where I can get a substantial dinner?"

"Very few of the cafés are open," the man replied. "Unless you are a member of the Casino, about the only good place is the café Venus. It is rather a long walk, but one of the hacks will take you there in a few minutes."

As Gil stepped out to the curb and signalled with his cane to the driver of a passing hack, his nearest friend could not have doubted for a moment that the Cuban country boy had disappeared utterly. The inhospitable Spanish lady could never find him, because he did not exist. In his place there had sprung up a fine-looking young man of pleasing appearance, of dark complexion, but hardly as dark as the average of young Cubans, neatly dressed in well-fitting clothes, with an ease of manner that was not one of the least of his acquirements from travel. There was nothing of the dandy about him; he might more naturally have been taken for a young man of good family in some easy employment; and as if he had always been doing such things, he stepped into the hack and started for the café Venus.

Amusement, excitement, and fatigue all had a place in his mind and body as the carriage rolled rapidly through the steep and uneven streets of Santiago. He was tired enough to fall instantly asleep on the hard cushions, but to some extent the excitement kept him up; and he was thoroughly amused at the rapid change he had made in his appearance and condition.

"One thing is sure," he said to himself, as he leaned

back against the cushion. "If I have to spend as much money every day in Cuba as I've spent to-day, the government will soon have to issue more bonds."

In a few minutes he was set down in front of the restaurant, which looked delightful to him because it offered both rest and food. It was in a queer old building whose second story projected so far over the first that it almost covered the narrow sidewalk; and in its big front windows there was no glass, only heavy iron bars.

Gil recognized that it would not do for him to show curiosity about anything. He must act, as far as possible, as though everything was familiar to him. When he stepped inside he found a large room with a very high boarded ceiling in which the cross-beams showed and both ceiling and beams painted a light blue. There were a great many small tables, some for two and some for four persons, with bamboo chairs; and the floor, he noticed, was paved with marble. At the inner end a long bar, with a profusion of mirrors, extended completely across the room; and more than half the tables were occupied by customers who ate and drank as complacently as if the whole island were in the happiest state.

He chose one of the small tables for two, with as much of the air of an old frequenter of the place as he could assume, and soon found from the bill of fare that the food was limited to a few varieties, of which fish formed a large proportion, and that the

prices were extremely high. He ordered a substantial meal of meat and fish; and the first dishes had just arrived, when another gentleman seated himself at the opposite end of the table.

"Good evening, señor," the newcomer said, after the fashion of the country.

As Gil politely but briefly returned the salutation, he saw that his neighbor was a fine-looking gentleman of perhaps thirty-four or thirty-five, with dark complexion, and dark mustache and beard to match, the latter carefully trimmed to a point under the chin. His clothes were of the best material and cut, though heavier, Gil thought, than suited the climate; and the hat that he had hung up on a hook was a high black beaver. He looked like a man of substance and position, and Gil noticed that the waiter treated him with great deference.

The few remarks that they exchanged during the meal could hardly be called a conversation, being confined to such things as commonly pass between near neighbors at a restaurant table; but Gil could not help observing that it was the other who spoke first on each occasion, and that it was purely for the sake of making a sociable meal, for he took up none but the most commonplace topics, and even then spoke with great caution. But Gil was equally cautious in his replies, not caring to add an evening chapter to his morning's experience.

When he had finished his dinner, having taken ample time to it, like his neighbor, and having given the waiter so liberal a tip that he felt assured of his friendship, Gil asked, as the waiter handed him his hat: —

"Can you tell me of some good place where I can be accommodated with a night's lodging?"

"I'm afraid not, sir," the waiter replied; "it's very hard to get accommodations in the city just now, sir. There are no hotels, and such places as take lodgers are mostly either closed or crowded."

"Well, that's bad!" Gil laughed, though he felt as if nothing would be such a luxury as a good night's rest. "But there must be *some* place a man can sleep, in a city of this size. Can't you think of any sort of place?"

He noticed as he spoke that his neighbor was looking keenly at him, as if making up his mind what manner of man he was; and before the waiter could answer the gentleman spoke for him.

"It is very hard to find any sort of accommodation in the city just now," he said. "But we flatter ourselves that what we lack in facilities we make up in hospitality. I am at present alone in my house, where there is ample room; and as you are evidently a stranger I shall feel flattered if you will allow me to be your host till you can make better arrangements."

"Oh, thank you very much, señor," Gil instantly answered; "but I could not think of intruding upon

you in such a way. If you would recommend me to some place, señor, I should be glad to pay liberally."

"Oh, it is not a question of pay," the gentleman laughed; "I do not keep a hotel. But I do not like to see a respectable young man without a place to lay his head, when I have beds in abundance."

Beyond thanking him warmly for his kindness, Gil hardly knew what to say. The burnt child dreads the fire, and he had no fancy for burning his fingers twice on the same day. But, on the other hand, to spend the night without a proper lodging would be likely to expose him to the attention of the police. While he rapidly deliberated, however, the question was settled for him.

"The young señor is very fortunate," the smiling waiter said. "It is not every stranger in the city who has the honor of an invitation from Señor Warfield. You cannot do better than accept it, señor."

The gentleman was so evidently known to the restaurant people, and his own need was so pressing, that Gil instantly came to the same conclusion; and there followed a few moments of those polite hesitancies and urgings that are common to all countries. In the end the only question was whether they should walk or ride to Señor Warfield's residence.

"Is it far, señor?" Gil asked.

"Oh, just a fine walk for a pleasant evening," his new host answered. "It is down on the edge of the harbor."

"Then I hope you will permit me to do the honors with a hack," Gil said; "I have walked so far to-day that I could hardly do another mile."

And the words were scarcely out of his mouth before he felt that he had said a little too much already.

"Have you come far?" the stranger asked, with evident interest.

"I had some business beyond El Caney," Gil cautiously answered, "and walked into the city."

"No wonder you are tired, then," said the gentleman, in a sympathetic tone; "we will ride by all means." And within five minutes they were in another of the Santiago hacks, tearing like mad through the rough and dimly lighted streets.

Though he was still on the alert for danger, Gil was fairly worn out with the day's experience; and as the hack wheels plunged furiously into ravine-like ruts, or dashed wildly against loose boulders, threatening destruction at every moment, it seemed to his dozing fancy as if they were singing a tune of utter indifference: —

"We may get there,
Or we may not.
Just as it happens,
And the fare's the same."

Cabby brought them safely through all the dangers, however, and brought up with a jerk at his destination, and they both sprang out.

And the first look at the building, in the dim light, gave the young scout another shock. It seemed as if there was to be positively no end to adventure that day. For this was no residence at all that they had come to, but an immense low building that seemed to cover the entire block, and that might have been a warehouse, or a barrack, or a freight depot, or anything in the world but the house of a hospitable Cuban. The long rows of windows were closed up tight with heavy iron shutters; and in the middle was an immense doorway, arched, that a load of hay might have been driven through, closed with two heavy, iron-studded doors.

"It is my place of business," Señor Warfield said, noticing the expression of surprise in Gil's face.

He took from his pocket a key that seemed to Gil about the size of a banquet lamp, unlocked one of the great doors, threw it open, and led the way in.

When they were both in the total darkness of the interior, Señor Warfield struck a match and lighted a candle that stood on a convenient shelf, put the key inside and locked the door, shot two immense iron bolts, and put up two thick wooden bars that stood in the corner.

Gil saw by the dim light that they were in a broad corridor, walled and paved with stone.

Señor Warfield stepped up to a stout wire that hung

loose against one of the walls and pulled it with a jerk, and a strange-sounding bell jingled somewhere in the distance.

Gil quietly slipped his hand around to the new pocket in which his revolver lay.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ALMIREZ & WARFIELD WAREHOUSE.

WHAT that bell might summon was a matter of considerable interest to Gil. Would it be a prison turnkey with a bunch of great keys dangling in his hand? or a file of soldiers? He must soon know, for Señor Warfield stood waiting with his hand still upon the wire, as if expecting an immediate answer.

Even then he did not regret that he had walked into the big building and allowed himself to be locked in. Better take his chances there, with a good revolver in his pocket, than run the risk of passing the night without shelter, and falling into the hands of the authorities.

In a moment he heard a sound like the closing of a distant door, and then a faint light appeared a long way off — so distant that it seemed a block away; but it gradually grew nearer, without any sound of footsteps, and presently it entered the corridor in which they stood.

It proved to be nothing more formidable than a candle carried by a Cuban boy, who had evidently

been roused from sleep by the bell, for he wore nothing but shirt and trousers, and had the look of one suddenly awakened.

And he was so handsome and innocent-looking a boy that Gil was ready to laugh at his former suspicions. About sixteen or seventeen years old he seemed to be, and of average height for a Cuban of that age, with a suspicion of pink showing through the rich mahogany color of his face, and a mass of wavy black hair that stole almost down to his bright chestnut eyes. Evidently a servant by his bearing, he looked like an intelligent one.

"Rafael," Señor Warfield said to the newcomer, as they stepped forward to meet him, "this gentleman will be my guest to-night, and I hope for some time. I want you to make him as comfortable as possible in the room adjoining mine; and let him want for nothing."

"Yes, sir," the boy answered cheerfully, as though he were used to orders of that kind.

They were walking down the corridor together, and soon emerged, through a broad doorway without any door, into a vast warehouse that seemed, by their dim light, limitless in size, but perfectly empty; and the ring of their boot-heels upon the stone-paved floor echoed uncannily among the invisible rafters.

"It is too early for me to think of turning in yet," Señor Warfield said to Gil as they crossed the long

warehouse, "and I have some outside matters to see to that may keep me out late. But I brought you directly here because I know you must be tired out. I leave you in good hands, for Rafael will not neglect you until I return. Do not fail to show the way to the bathing-pool, Rafael, for nothing is more refreshing after a day's work, not even sleep itself. And now if you will pardon my absence for the present, señor, I will leave you in Rafael's hands. Do not hesitate to ask for anything you want."

They had crossed the warehouse by this time and entered a courtyard in which trees and flowers were growing, and the host, after shaking Gil's hand and wishing him pleasant dreams, turned into a narrower hallway, which evidently led to a smaller and more private exit. Rafael, however, kept directly on across the courtyard with the candle, and Gil of course followed.

They went into a small vestibule in a rear building and up a flight of stairs, and during the ascent Rafael blew out his candle, for the place was well lighted with gas. It was only the big warehouse that was dark and ghostly; in this rear part, which in its upper story was evidently the living apartments, everything looked cheerful and homelike.

There was a large corridor there, too, paved with red tiles, from which eight or ten doors, nearly all standing open, led to as many sleeping and other rooms, only one of which bore any signs of occupancy.

"This will be your room, señor," Rafael said, as he led the way into the chamber next the one that was occupied, and lighted the gas.

"Oh, I shall sleep famously here, Rafael," Gil said, wishing to have some conversation with the boy.

Indeed, it was a room that any tired young sailor might well have slept famously in. Large, sixteen or eighteen feet in each direction, with a very high ceiling of boards painted a delicate pink, with red tiles for a floor, with two large iron-barred windows with no glass, but inside shutters of wood, it was extremely plain, like most Cuban sleeping rooms, but designed to give its occupant what is most needed in that climate, — plenty of fresh air. There was a broad brass bedstead, with a mosquito canopy over it and a rug on the floor by its side, and a dressing-case of white-enamelled wood; and two or three chairs completed the simple furnishing; and the bed looked deliciously white and cool.

"Yes, sir, I think we can make you comfortable here," Rafael answered.

"Nothing will make me as comfortable as to get into that bathing-pool the señor spoke of," Gil continued, "and then right into bed. I have had a very long walk to-day, and am about used up."

He threw himself into one of the chairs as he spoke, feeling that it would be hard work to take

another step; and almost before he knew it Rafael was untying his shoes.

"I thought you looked very tired, sir," the boy said; "but you'll have nothing to do now but rest. I'll have you in the bath in just a minute, sir."

Gil had never been in the hands of an experienced valet before, and had no idea that any man could perform such useful services. In almost no time Rafael not only had him ready for the bath, but his clothes all either neatly folded or hung up, and one of Señor Warfield's bath-robes thrown over his shoulders, and a pair of bath-slippers on his feet.

But when the boy led the way to the bath-room, across the corridor, it seemed to Gil almost as if he had wandered into fairyland. It was as large as two or three of the other rooms, with both floor and walls plated with white marble, and instead of a bath-tub, a tank sunk into the floor in the centre, large enough for a dozen men, and covered with blue-and-white tiles. And into the tank a small but constant stream of water flowed from a pipe, so that it might be always fresh, and when the tank was nearly full the surplus water flowed out through a larger pipe in the opposite end.

Gil lost no time in throwing off his gown and slippers and plunging into the clear cool water; and while he splattered about and washed away half the fatigues of the day, Rafael disappeared, to return in a moment

with a small square basket loaded with toilet requisites — towels, brushes, sponges, and bottles of perfume; and when he left the water in a few minutes feeling like a new man, he went through such a course of drying, brushing, and spraying with perfume at the hands of Rafael, that he was not quite sure that he was indeed Gilbert Standish, late of Cairo, Greene County, New York.

While Rafael was stowing him away for the night, which in the case of a good Cuban valet means arranging the bed for him, letting down the mosquito canopy, opening the inside shutters, and putting out the light, Gil took the opportunity to ask him a few questions about the hospitable gentleman by whom he was furnished with all these luxuries.

"This is Señor Warfield's place of business, is it, Rafael?" he asked. "And does he live here?"

"Yes, señor," Rafael replied; "he lives here, and so do a number of the clerks. But it is all done now till this horrid war is over — clerks gone, business stopped, and the great warehouse empty. This is a very large firm, señor; one of the largest in Cuba. I shall be just across the corridor if you should want anything in the night. Good night, señor."

"Good night, Rafael." And Gil's efforts to think over the events of the day were all unavailing, for in another minute he was enjoying the sleep he had well earned, not to be disturbed even by the late entrance of

Señor Warfield, though the door between their rooms stood open.

He might have slept on indefinitely if he had not been gently aroused in the early morning by hearing some one stirring in his room. It was Rafael, who had come with a tray on which were a cup of steaming coffee, a hot roll, and a little pot of white unsalted butter.

"Good morning, señor," said he, as he set the tray down on the side of the bed within easy reach. "Señor Warfield sends his compliments, and hopes you had a good night's sleep."

Before Gil could answer, Señor Warfield himself appeared in the doorway, in bath-gown and slippers, and holding his cup of coffee in his hand.

"Good morning, señor!" he exclaimed; "I hope Rafael took good care of you after I left you last night."

"He bathed me and put me to bed, like a good nurse, señor," Gil laughed; "and I don't think I turned over once all night. I shall never be able to thank you for your hospitality."

"Then don't try," said his host, taking a sip of coffee, "for it is a pleasure to me to have company. I generally have a dozen young men here with me, and they make it so lively I feel the difference now they're gone. But I think you are only beginning your visit with me. I made some inquiries last night, and I find

it will be impossible for you to rent comfortable quarters anywhere in the town at present; so you must be my guest while you are in Santiago, whether or no."

Gil demurred to this, as he naturally must, and hinted that he should be delighted to stay if he could be allowed to pay for his accommodations. But his host laughed at such an idea, and insisted that Gil should remain his guest.

"We are very free in our hours just now," he continued, "while the business is closed; but we have breakfast on the verandah every morning at twelve, and I usually dine at the café Venus at seven. So if you will make it a point to be here at twelve, you need trouble yourself with no other rules."

"You will have no trouble to find the place," he went on. "Any one can direct you to the Almirez & Warfield warehouse, and you will find it convenient to use the side door that I went out of last night. And by the way, we had better introduce ourselves. My name is Warfield, as I think you know."

"I ought to have asked you sooner, señor," Gil answered, "to call me Ramon Ortiz. I am looking for —"

"Yes, looking for a lodging," Señor Warfield interrupted. "And now you have found it. I have no curiosity about your business in Santiago, Señor Ramon, and perhaps in these troubled times it is

better for me not to know it — unless, indeed," he hastily added, "I can be of any service to you."

Gil thanked him for the kind offer, and promised to be on hand promptly for breakfast, saying that he had some matters to attend to during the morning.

It was well, he thought, while Señor Warfield was dressing and preparing to go out, that he had settled that name business in advance. Pedro Alvarez, the country boy, had disappeared, and his name must die with him. Ramon Ortiz he did not think as fine a name, but it would do for a few days.

After another plunge in the blue-and-white tank, and more careful attentions on the part of Rafael, Gil went out to make his first deliberate observations in the city of Santiago. As he could put nothing on paper, neither word nor diagram, everything that he saw must be firmly fixed in his mind. He gave the greater part of the morning to an examination of the harbor and its immediate surroundings, and was relieved to find that there were still no signs of Admiral Cervera's ships.

He could go, he discovered, anywhere about the city without challenge, except, of course, into the forts; and he was not slow to see that a few days of hard work would put him in possession of information that would be invaluable in case of an attack upon the place. So far he had carried out his instructions to the letter, and good fortune or something better had smoothed the way for him while in the city.

That first morning's work gave him a good general idea not only of the harbor, but also of three of the important forts on the south side of the city: the fuerte Gesu, fuerte Punta Blanca, and fuerte del Centro, and of their garrisons and armaments; and when he returned to the warehouse to breakfast at noon, Señor Warfield was already there.

To sit on a shady veranda and eat a capital breakfast at noon, in good company, with the consciousness that he had done a good morning's work, and that he was performing his whole duty, was as much luxury as a young engineer from the *St. Louis* could well ask for. The only drawbacks were that Ben Hanway was not there to see him, and that there was no possible chance of communicating with home.

It did not surprise him that the breakfast was such a meal as he would have called a remarkably good dinner at home, beginning with soup and going through the whole course of fish, roasts, and sweets, for he knew the Cuban custom; but he was surprised that Rafael, who was evidently the only servant in the building, could cook and serve so excellent a repast.

He could not help feeling anxious about the news of the war, for there was the possibility that Cervera might have escaped the watchful eyes of our fleets and have made an attack upon some American port. But he soon saw that if Señor Warfield knew of any public affairs, he was well able to keep the knowledge to him-

self. A remarkably reticent man was Señor Warfield, except on the most trivial affairs. He could talk fluently about his losses in business, and the high prices of jerked beef and black beans; but whenever Gil spoke of the war or the blockade, he promptly changed the subject.

"I was going to give you a view of the town this morning," the señor said, when the breakfast was over, "to help you in finding your way about; but it slipped my mind. However, it is not too late now, if you feel like climbing a few stairs."

Gil was perfectly willing, and he followed his host up to his sleeping room. There Señor Warfield opened a door at one side of the room, disclosing what seemed to be the end of a narrow spiral iron staircase.

"This leads to a balcony on the roof," he explained. "In better times we are interested in a great many of the ships that enter and leave the harbor, and from the balcony we can watch their movements."

He led the way up, and in a moment they were on a small platform on the top of the building, surrounded by a strong iron rail.

"You see there is a fine view of everything from here," Señor Warfield said; "the harbor, the whole city, and the mountains beyond. That large building just back of us is the Cathedral; and here nearly in front is the railway station. And do you see that old wreck lying over the end of the harbor? just beyond

the black steamer with the yellow funnel? That is what is left of the ancient Spanish ship the *St. Paul*, the flagship of the great Spanish Armada. You must come up here whenever you feel inclined; it is a great place for a fine cool breeze."

"This place must have been made expressly for my use," Gil said to himself as he thanked Señor Warfield for his kindness. "Here I can keep a lookout for Cervera's fleet."

CHAPTER XIX.

SURPRISING NEWS FROM CONSUL RAMSDEN.

THE trifling matters are always pushing themselves forward and giving us more concern than the great ones. Here was Gil safely arrived in the hostile city of Santiago, and settled in better quarters than he had ever occupied before in his life, and getting information as fast as he could expect, and yet he was troubled in mind about so unimportant a thing as clothes.

The fact was that after his first morning's work in the hot city, his new clothes began to look and to feel decidedly the worse for wear. His shirt was soiled and crumpled, the collar was wilted, and his new trousers, being made of what the ladies call "wash goods," already showed unsightly signs of use.

Señor Warfield's clothes were something quite astonishing to the young scout. Every time that Gil saw him he was in a fresh outfit from head to foot, and the shirts and other linen garments that were scattered about his room seemed sufficient to clothe the whole crew of the *St. Louis*.

Bad as Gil's clothes had already become, he knew that every hour would make them worse; and to replace them he must buy more, and to buy more he must have money.

There was the rub. All his gold pieces were gone already, and he was reduced to a small handful of silver.

"I don't see anything for it but to apply to Mr. Ramsden for more," he said to himself. "And the sooner the better, for the longer I put it off, the worse I shall look, and I'll soon be in such bad order that I'll be ashamed to go anywhere at all. Of course it costs me more to pass for a young gentleman than for a poor country boy; but I don't believe the department will begrudge the money if I get the information they want."

To ask Señor Warfield for Mr. Ramsden's address he thought would not be advisable, as it might give some clew to his business. But addresses are easily found in a city where cheap cabs are in vogue.

Señor Warfield went out again immediately after breakfast, and he was no sooner gone than Gil went down to the street, hailed the first cab that appeared, and stepping in, told the driver: —

"To the British consul's."

After a few minutes' drive he was set down in front of a large house in one of the best streets of the city, with a very heavy brass knocker on the front door,

which made such a racket when he struck it he thought he must arouse the whole neighborhood.

"I should like to see Mr. Ramsden," he said to the young colored man who answered the summons, at the same time handing him a card that he had prepared beforehand, bearing the name in pencil, "Sr. Ramon Ortiz."

The man took him through the tiled hall into such a Cuban parlor as Gil had often heard of but had never before seen. The floor was paved with small square blocks of white and black marble, there were no curtains, and two long rows of rocking-chairs of bent wood stretched straight down the room from the tall mirror between the two front windows, so that their occupants must sit facing one another.

Gil seated himself in one of the chairs to wait, and he did not have to wait long. In a few moments Consul Ramsden appeared, holding the card in his hand. He was a tall, fine-looking gentleman, past the middle age, with so kindly an expression in his face that Gil took to him at once.

"Señor Ortiz?" he said inquiringly.

"Yes, sir," Gil answered, rising and stepping toward him, and taking the hand that the consul extended.

"Ni firmes carta que no leas, señor, ni hebes agua que no veas," Gil said, in a low tone, using the password that Commander McCalla had given him.

"Ah!" said the consul; and he looked his visitor

steadily in the eye for a moment, still holding his hand.

"It is an excellent motto, Señor Ortiz," he added, "that we will all do well to follow. Will you step this way, señor?"

He led the way out into the hall again, through the hall to a courtyard in the rear, with a large fountain playing in the centre and beautifully decorated with plants and flowers; across the court to an iron stairway leading on the outside to the second story of the rear building, up the stairs, and through the door into a room, carefully closing the door after him. The room seemed to be a sort of literary workshop, being littered with books and papers.

"Now, Señor Ortiz," the consul said, when they were seated, "what can I do for you? But wait!" he added; "do you speak English?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" Gil replied.

"Then perhaps we had better carry on our conversation in English," the consul said.

"Commander McCalla, of the *Marblehead*," Gil began, "instructed me to apply to you for any assistance I might need while in Santiago, sir."

"Did he, indeed!" the consul interrupted, smiling. "And you are in need of assistance now?"

"Yes, sir," Gil replied. "I have only been on the island for a day or two, and—"

"Wait a moment!" the consul interrupted; "do not

explain your affairs to me until I explain my own situation. I am the representative here of a neutral power, as you know, and as such it would be highly improper for me to act as the agent of your government. I say *your* government, because the password you have given me tells me what brings you here. What I have engaged to do is to give the name and address of the American secret agent here to any of your people who apply to me for it. Such an agent has been appointed, and he will give you whatever assistance you expected to get from me. That much I can do with propriety, but hardly any more.

"Now are you good at remembering names?" he continued. "It is not well to put anything upon paper, and you must impress this upon your memory. The man you want is Señor José Warfield, of the firm of Almirez & Warfield, in the Calle Cristina."

Gil sprang up from his chair.

"Warfield, did I understand you, sir?" he gasped; "Señor José Warfield, of Almirez & Warfield? Is *he* the secret agent of the United States in Santiago?"

"He certainly is," the consul answered; "why not?"

"Why, that is the gentleman I am staying with!" Gil exclaimed.

"Very likely," the consul replied, with a smile. "Then you are in good hands, for Señor Warfield is a man of wonderful shrewdness and great resources."

"Then I need not take your time any further,

Mr. Ramsden," Gil said, making an effort to recover his equanimity; "and I thank you very much for the information. I should like to ask you one question, however, before I go."

"A dozen, my boy, if you like," the consul answered.

"Is there any possible way that I can send a letter home from here, sir?" Gil asked.

Mr. Ramsden deliberated a moment before answering.

"It is possible for me to send a letter for you," he said; "but whether it is safe for you to send one depends upon how carefully you can write it. If you can write a short letter so guardedly that all the Spaniards in Cuba might read it without discovering anything, it can be done."

"I think I can do that, sir," Gil asserted.

"Then have it here by this time to-morrow," the consul told him, "and it will go with a packet of despatches that I have arranged to send by way of St. Thomas to-morrow night. But be very cautious with it, sign it with a single initial, and do not address the envelope for it until you are here in my house. And if it comes to the worst with you, my boy (as it may at any moment in this business), I will help you at all hazards, for I am a friend of America and the Americans. But be cautious, lad, be cautious!"

Gil went away feeling sure that he had one friend, at any rate, in Santiago. But he felt a little humiliated to think that he had been staying with the

American agent without discovering it. And did Señor Warfield suspect him, he wondered, and take him in for that reason? If so, his disguise must be so poor that he was in danger every moment.

It was useless, he knew, to return to the warehouse at that hour, for Señor Warfield would be out; so he visited several more points of importance, acquired more information, and kept watch upon the harbor for the fleet that still did not come. When he went back before six o'clock, Rafael was getting the señor's clothes ready to dress him for dinner, and the host was stretched upon his bed, reading a newspaper.

After a little commonplace conversation, Gil asked leave to send Rafael out to buy him some collar buttons, which was readily granted; and the boy being thus out of the way, he lost no time in making himself known.

"Señor," he said, stepping up to the side of his host's bed, "I think we can know each other better. Ni firmes carta que no leas, ni hebes agua que no veas. I have visited Consul Ramsden this afternoon, señor."

"Sh!" Señor Warfield exclaimed, laying a finger over his lips; "walls have ears in this country." And he sprang up and shut both doors, adding, "We understand each other without more words. I thought as much."

"That is what I want particularly to ask you about, señor," Gil insisted. "It is of the greatest importance

to me. I could not believe that even Cuban hospitality was a sufficient reason for your bringing an entire stranger into your house. Now, tell me frankly, please, — am I so poorly disguised that you suspected my mission as soon as you saw me?"

"I must answer both yes and no to that," Señor Warfield replied. "There was nothing about your appearance or manner to arouse my suspicion in the least. It was simply your being a stranger that made me suspicious. There are so few strangers here just now, except in uniform; people are getting out of the city, not coming into it.

"I reasoned in this way," he continued. "Here is a young stranger in Santiago. What brings him here? Not pleasure, for there is no pleasure in the city at present; not business, for there is no business. He is just the right age and cut to be in some government service. If he is in the service of the right government, I want him where I can look after him; if in the service of any other, I must have him where I can keep my eye upon him.

"That is the whole secret of it. And now that we know each other, Señor Ortiz," he went on, "you know where to come when you are in need of anything — for you are certain to need something sooner or later."

"I need something already, señor," Gil answered. "I am running out of money, and need some to buy clothes."

Señor Warfield burst into a laugh at the mention of clothes.

"You do not know what a sharp eye I have been keeping upon your clothes!" he said; "just like a cat watching a mouse. When you came last night, everything you had on was new, fresh out of the shops. You must soon have more, and if you brought trunks or satchels here, I could judge from them about where you came from. If you had no baggage, then I was free to conclude that you came from —"

"From where, sir?" Gil asked, smiling, as his host paused.

"*From the ships outside!*" Señor Warfield whispered, with his mouth close to Gil's ear. "Sh! here is Rafael. Yes, your draft upon us is just as good as if our business was still in progress." (This was for the benefit of Rafael, who had entered the room.) "And the clothes you speak of might as well be bought before dinner, for there is plenty of time. It is one of the beauties of war that it turns your hours inside out. Whether we dine at seven or at eleven, what matter?"

Before they set out in a cab for the tailor's, Señor Warfield found opportunity to put a hundred dollars in Spanish gold into Gil's hand, saying: —

"What few things we need bring home with us for this evening, you can pay for out of that. But your main outfit had better be made to order, and they will of course send a bill. You can give me vouchers for

whatever I supply you with, so that I can account for it."

"Oh, señor," Gil protested, "I shall not need nearly as much as this. I don't think they would want me to spend so much money for clothes."

"Nonsense, lad!" Señor Warfield laughed. "Your firm will want you to be dressed appropriately for whatever business you have in hand, like any other good firm. You cannot do your sort of work without being well clad. Besides, you know I am in a measure your superior officer just now, and you must follow my instructions. I will take all the responsibility for your having a proper outfit; leave it all to me."

It was Señor Warfield's own tailor that they went to — a much more elegant and more expensive establishment than any that Gil had visited, with a great stock of everything for men's wear. And when, after Gil had selected the few things that he needed for immediate use, the señor had his measure taken and began ordering shirts for him by the dozen, and "wash" trousers and vests by the half dozen, and the finest of underwear, and other things in proportion, he offered more objections; but they were of no avail.

"It is no more than any young gentleman in the city must have," the señor insisted. "Indeed, it is hardly enough, for we use clothes very fast in this warm climate. You must be well fitted out, at any rate. 'The best pay for the best work,' is one of my business mottoes."

"But when I go away?" Gil still objected.

"Then they can be sent after you," Señor Warfield laughed. "I want to introduce you into some good society in Santiago, and you cannot go barefoot."

In the restaurant that evening, where he felt more comfortable in a clean shirt, Gil overheard an important conversation between two Spanish officers who sat near by, while his host busied himself with a newspaper, apparently hearing nothing. But Señor Warfield was not asleep.

CHAPTER XX.

GIL VISITS HIS PLANTATION.

NEVER before had Gil had so much pleasure in writing home. So many things had been happening to him. Everything about him was so new and strange, the people were so different, the buildings, the way of living, that it seemed to him as if he were in a new world, far removed from everything that had been dear and familiar to him before.

But the few unsatisfactory lines he could send home brought all the old loved surroundings back to him with great force. He was back in the old sitting room, he was up in the attic poring over the contents of the black trunk, he was in Jason's store, down at the swimming hole with the boys — just for five minutes while he was writing. Then Señor Warfield came in and brought him back to Cuba and the strange and dangerous life he was leading.

With all its dangers, the very luxury of it made him feel in spite of himself as if he were wasting time. Day after day passed, and still there were no signs of the fleet. He had studied the harbor so well, and charts

of the harbor, that he knew that if it did come, his information would be invaluable to the government. And if the Spaniards had known how much he knew about their forts and their troops and equipments, they would never have let him escape from Santiago alive. Still it seemed hardly right for him to be living in this way while his comrades were enduring so many hardships for their country.

"But after all," he often said to himself, "these are my orders, and I must obey them. Commander McCalla's instructions were positive that I should stay here till the fleet arrived, or till I received further orders."

He had fallen, without any effort on his own part, into one of the greatest luxuries of life in the tropics. Several mornings after his first visit to Consul Ramsden, he was awakened by Rafael making frequent visits to his room, bearing each time an armful of bundles.

"What is all this, Rafael?" he asked, as he saw the dressing-case, the chairs, even the window-sills, loaded with parcels.

"The things come from the tailor's, señor," Rafael replied; and from that moment Gil enjoyed what in a hot climate is more to be desired than fine houses, fine horses, or even good food — a plunge into cool water and a fresh outfit of clothes from head to foot upon awaking, and the same before dinner. We in the cooler north can hardly appreciate the luxury of the bathing-pool and plenty of fresh linens in the tropics.

During one of their delightful breakfasts on the veranda Gil told Señor Warfield that he had heard much about the Standish plantation and expressed a desire to see the place now that he was so near it.

"Why, there is no reason why you should not see it," his host instantly replied. "I know the place well; indeed, it has been in my hands for sale more than once since the Spaniards took possession of it. I knew the American named Standish who bought it, and did business with him. I have never told you, I think, that I am almost an American myself, as both my parents were Americans, though I was born in Cuba."

At this Gil was strongly tempted to tell his host that he was the nephew of that Standish whom he had known; but as that might involve telling much more, he kept silence.

"We can drive out there any morning, by making an early start," Señor Warfield continued. "I can get the necessary passes without difficulty to take us both ways past the lines. But if we go, it had better be soon, for we are on the verge of the rainy season, and the rains may begin at any time. How would you like to go out to-morrow?"

Gil deliberated a moment before answering. Would it be too great a risk for him to run? There was little danger of his seeing the Spanish lady, and still less of her recognizing him in his new disguise.

"I should be delighted to go, señor," he answered,

"if nothing happens to prevent. You know my chief business here, without my telling you. If that fleet should arrive, of course it would change all my plans."

"Oh, of course," Señor Warfield agreed. "But we need not be away more than three or four hours. I will get the passes this afternoon."

To tell the truth they were not the first passes the señor had provided Gil with. Some of his visits to the fortifications might have been accounted for in the same way. At any rate, he got these without trouble, and Rafael gave them some eggs and fresh fish with their early coffee, and before seven o'clock in the morning they were well on their way.

Gil could not help looking with great interest at the places he had passed a few days before under such different circumstances. There was the long, rough street out beyond the barracks; the field through which he had run to avoid El Caney; and in the distance he soon recognized the country he had traversed, footsore and weary, after his escape from the Spanish soldiers. None of these things had been confided to Señor Warfield, so Gil had to enjoy the sights in silence; whatever Gil needed he was to ask for, it had been agreed; but the señor considered it safer for them not to know too much of each other's affairs.

"You have only your neck at stake — a very trifling matter," he once said to Gil. "I have not only my

neck, but my business and property also, and my partner's. I cannot afford to make any mistakes."

So Gil was not as much surprised as he might have been, when, as the road wound around a hill, the señor pointed to the familiar tower in the distance, saying: —

"There is our destination. That is La Sierra plantation house."

"Ah!" said Gil, very coolly; "that's the place, is it? It seems to be well situated, on a hilltop."

"You will think so when you reach it!" the señor exclaimed. "It has one of the finest views in Cuba. On a perfectly clear day you can see the mountains of Jamaica from the top of that tower. Perhaps we can to-day."

It was still a long way off; but in the early morning, and in a covered carriage, Gil found travelling much more pleasant than he had found it before. They passed some army wagons going in toward Santiago, returning, as the señor suggested, from Caimanera; and some people on foot, and a small body of troops whom they overtook but who paid no attention to them; and they were within a mile of the Standish place when they saw coming toward them a little cavalcade composed of two mounted men in advance, a volante containing probably a passenger whom they could not yet see, a mounted man on each side of it, and two more mounted men bringing up the rear. The volante, they soon saw, was drawn by two horses, one

in front of the other, with a liveried driver on the leading horse.

"That looks like old times!" Señor Warfield exclaimed. "We have not seen much volante riding for the last few years. The Cubans do not make such a display at present, even those who have horses or money left. This must be some person who can command the protection of the troops, and therefore a Spaniard. Possibly it may be some one I know, for my acquaintance is very large. I manage by keeping quiet to be on reasonably good terms with both parties."

The leather top of the volante was so broad a shelter from sun and rain, and its interior so dark, that even when it was close to them they could not make out more than that its occupant was a lady. But while they could not see they could hear, and they heard the lady give some order to the driver; and when the vehicles were exactly opposite, the volante stopped, and the driver of the carriage pulled up his horses.

"Why, Señor Warfield!" the lady exclaimed, leaning so far forward that Gil could see that she wore a lace mantilla over her head instead of a bonnet, and that her face was wonderfully ornamented with powder. "What a piece of good fortune to meet you! You have saved me a journey to Santiago. Do you know, I was actually going to drive into that dreadful place, to give some information to the police."

Something in the tone of the voice instantly attracted Gil's attention. He did not recognize the face, but he certainly had heard that voice before.

"The police!" Señor Warfield repeated, as he sprang out of the carriage and went up to the front of the volante. "I am delighted, I am sure, if I can relieve the Señora Avila from so unpleasant a duty."

The Señora Avila! Gil was face to face with the Spanish lady who had entertained and betrayed him, though he had not recognized her face. Instinctively he drew further back into the shade of the carriage; but it would only make matters worse to try to hide, so he resumed his former position.

"Unpleasant indeed!" the lady continued. "And all made necessary by these sleepy soldiers of ours. Oh, my husband is as bad as the rest of them!" she exclaimed, as if in answer to Señor Warfield's inquiring smile. "Everything is *mañana* with them. It's to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow. I do believe this war will not be ended till we ladies take matters into our own hands. Do you know, señor, I am on the track of a spy; and the troops are so sluggish that I am driven to applying to the police."

"A spy!" Señor Warfield again repeated. "Señora Avila tracking a spy!"

"Alas, yes!" the lady went on. "And perhaps you have seen him yourself, señor, for I am sure he has gone to Santiago. He was a young fellow, hardly

more than a boy; not such a bad-looking young fellow, but without shoes, and with a very ragged hat and soiled, poor clothes. About eighteen or twenty, I should take him to be. He stopped at my house for water, and after a little conversation with him I was so sure he was neither Cuban nor Spaniard that I actually made him stay and breakfast with me while I sent to the outpost for a guard. And they took him into custody, but the careless fellows let him escape, and now they have not energy enough to have him caught. You know what harm a spy might do just at this time. Have you noticed such a boy in the city, señor?"

"I can — hardly — say that I have, señora," Señor Warfield answered slowly, as if pausing to think. "You know we have many barefoot boys in Santiago just now, and many with torn hats and poor clothes. But nothing has directed my attention to such a boy or man. Have you seen any one answering such a description, Ortiz? Oh, excuse me. Step out, Ortiz, and let me have the pleasure of presenting you."

This was worse than Gil had anticipated. He must not only be seen by this lady, but must get out and talk with her. But there was absolutely no help for it, for to make any excuse would only attract attention to himself.

"Allow me to present my friend Señor Ortiz, Señora Avila," Warfield said, as Gil stepped up to the volante. "Have you seen such a young fellow in Santiago, señor?"

It was a very critical moment. The lady might recognize his voice, though his changed clothes made him feel confident in his appearance.

"I've an idea," he said, as he raised his hat and bowed, "that I saw very much such a fellow in El Caney the other day. Barefoot, you say, and with a torn straw hat? Rather an intelligent young fellow, señora, with a good face, and better bred than his clothes seemed to imply? Quite a bright sort of young man?"

It was sheer desperation that induced Gil to speak so freely and even to joke about his own appearance. He could not avoid speaking to the lady, so he concluded that his only chance was to put on a bold front and show a little of the interest that he felt in the case.

"Yes, quite an intelligent young person," Señora Avila answered. "But very poor in appearance, and I should say not at all good-looking. And you saw such a person in El Caney? He might well be there, if he had no means of passing the guard. Then I shall depend upon you, Señor Warfield, to inform the police of Santiago. He will reach there eventually, without doubt. And you will save me a very unpleasant journey, señor, for instead of going on to the city I shall drive out to my husband's headquarters. Good morning, gentlemen."

Assuring her that her suspicions should be made known in the proper quarter, Gil and his host reëntered

their carriage and drove on, and were soon within the boundaries of the Standish plantation. As they neared the building, the drive passed between two rows of beautiful palm trees, among the handsomest that Gil had seen in Cuba; and there were evidences on all sides of the former grandeur of the place.

"It must have been a fine place, in its better days," Gil suggested.

"A fine place indeed," Señor Warfield assented; "and a very valuable place, too — as it may be again," he added, "when the war comes to an end. I have seen this plantation produce so much money that the owners hardly knew what to do with it."

As no one appeared in answer to their calls, they opened a handsome iron gate that guarded the arched entrance to the large inner court, and went in, and proceeded directly, at Señor Warfield's suggestion, up a stone stairway to the top of the tower.

Gil had often said to himself that when he first saw the Standish place he should certainly be disappointed, because his expectations were too large. But the moment he set foot in the courtyard he saw that it was a much larger and grander place than he had ever imagined. Outside it was as plain as possible; but inside it bore evidences of having been such a place as a millionnaire planter might build for himself; and with the exception of the one corner that had fallen, it was in better repair than he had hoped.

It was not till they were at the top of the tower, leaning against the battlements, looking at the wonderful view, that Gil made any reference to the meeting with Señora Avila.

"You are going to speak to the police," he asked, "about the boy that lady is so anxious to have captured?"

"That depends," the señor answered, with a smile. "Why? Do you know anything about him?"

"I think I have seen him," Gil replied; "but the police never can find him, for he has disappeared."

"Disappeared!" the señor echoed; "and did you have anything to do with his disappearance?"

"A great deal!" Gil laughed. "When I put on these good clothes and threw away the torn straw hat, that handsome, intelligent boy disappeared forever."

"Oh, you're a sly one!" Señor Warfield exclaimed, laughing too. "And you talked to her about him as coolly as if you would be glad to see him captured. So you had your little adventures in Cuba before you met me, did you? No!" (holding up his hand for silence as Gil began to interrupt him) "don't tell me anything about it. It's better that I should not know. But after what you tell me, I shall inform the police by all means. As she did not recognize you, certainly they cannot; and to fail to do it might arouse her suspicion. Well! well! I should like to have seen you as a ragged barefoot boy, Señor Ortiz.

"But that danger is past," he continued, turning suddenly about, "so we need not trouble ourselves about it. I want you to look at this incomparable view. There is not a better on the whole island, unless it may be from some mountain-top. Do you see that dark speck far off in the southwest? That is Jamaica. And look at the beautiful blue water! Every steamer rounding the cape for Santiago or Cienfuegos passes within plain sight from here. I should want no better lot in life than to live in such a place as this, if we were at peace."

"Nor I!" said Gil, very earnestly. "How happy a man's family could be in such a place, with this beautiful view constantly before them."

He let his imagination run loose for a few minutes, and saw his mother presiding over the house, and rocking-chairs on the broad stone veranda overlooking the sea, and Rose and her mother busying themselves among the flowers in the court.

But it all seemed so far off! Or it might never be, for he realized that he still had many dangers to encounter. As they roamed about the deserted and empty house, he could not help making a rough calculation of what it would cost to make the place fairly habitable. Ah, that would take many a month's pay as cadet engineer on the *St. Louis*.

What had once been the handsome grounds stretched down in terraces to the sea, and they went down the

weed-grown walks and uneven steps to the beach. There, tied to a little wharf roughly made of boards, was a fisherman's boat, with both oars and sail lying in the bottom; and Gil examined the boat with great care.

"Ortiz," said Señor Warfield, while Gil was at this, "you may tell me one thing about your affairs. I have noticed several times within a few days that you were examining boats on the beach. Have you any information that is likely to take you away from me soon?"

"Ah, señor," Gil laughed, "I know just where to lay my hand on a dozen of them at any moment. You would not have me so negligent as to be without means of escape! No, I have no information; and I do not expect to leave you until — until —"

"Till there are more ships in the harbor, perhaps?" the señor suggested.

"Exactly," said Gil. "There's no telling when I may go, but when I do go, I shall be in a hurry."

CHAPTER XXI.

A DARING ESCAPE FROM SANTIAGO.

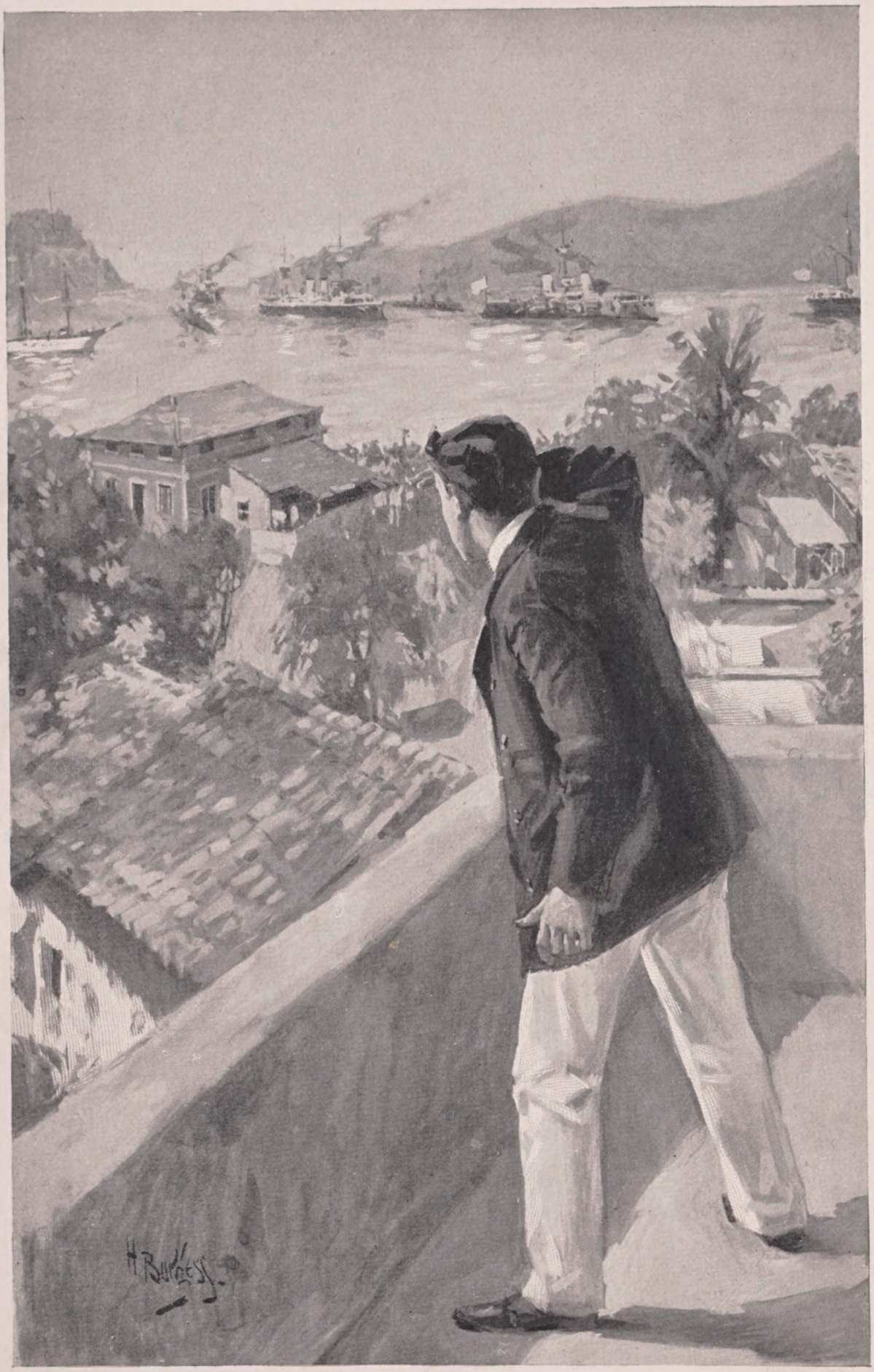
"HARK, Rafael! What can the bells be ringing for?"

"Oh, Señor Ortiz, how can I say? they are always ringing. It is the day of one of the blessed saints, no doubt."

But Gil was not satisfied with this explanation. He was accustomed to hearing the church bells ring frequently, but not at that hour; for it was nearly eight o'clock in the morning, and much too late for the early church services. Besides, they were ringing rapidly, joyously, not as if summoning the people to mass.

Many days had passed since Gil's visit to the plantation; so many that the date was the 20th of May. Señor Warfield had already had his early coffee, and dressed and gone out, and Gil was preparing for his day's work, putting on the fresh clothes that Rafael always had ready for him.

"No," he said, stepping to one of the windows and looking down; "there is some excitement in the city,



THERE WAS CERVERA'S FLEET.

surely. The streets are full, and everybody hurrying toward the wharves. Run out, Rafael, and let me know quickly what it is all about."

Rafael hurried down, and Gil hastily drew on the rest of his clothes. When he was fully dressed, he stood a moment by the open window to listen to the babel of voices, but could catch nothing to give him a clew. While he stood there the boy returned, breathless and excited.

"Oh, great news, señor!" he cried. "The Spanish fleet has passed the blockade, and is coming up the harbor! Hark!"

Just for a moment Gil stopped to listen, — long enough to hear the "boom! boom!" of heavy guns from Morro Castle in honor of the fleet's safe arrival. Then he sprang for the iron stairway, and dashed up to the roof three steps at a time.

There was Cervera's fleet, beyond a doubt, slowly and majestically entering the bay, with flags flying and bands playing, as if it had won a great victory, and cheers and bells and cannon on shore to bid it welcome.

For an instant Gil's heart stood still. Such rejoicing could hardly mean anything but a great triumph. Was it possible that these ships could have met the American fleet and sunk it? No, that could never be; but, otherwise, how did they get into the harbor? Surely the *Marblehead* and the *St. Louis*

would not let them pass without a single shot; but if there had been cannonading in the night, he must have heard it.

He could hardly wait till the ships drew close enough for him to see whether they bore signs of battle; but unconsciously he drew up his waist strap one hole tighter, for he knew that there was a day of hard and dangerous work before him. Before dark he must be on board the *St. Louis*, he thought, little dreaming that when he next saw the *St. Louis*, she would be in New York bay. And while he waited, Señor Warfield sprang up the stairs.

"Ha! your friends have arrived, señor!" he exclaimed.

"Tell me, Señor Warfield" — Gil was too much interested in the fate of his own fleet to stand on ceremony — "tell me, has there been an engagement? Or what does all this rejoicing mean?"

"Engagement! no!" Señor Warfield answered. "They sneaked in without firing a shot. And why not? There was nothing outside to stop them. There is no American ship in sight; they have all been withdrawn; and this rejoicing is only because the Spaniards have got safely into the harbor."

That was a relief, to hear that the American fleet was safe. But how could Gil believe that the ships had all been withdrawn from outside? Then where was the *St. Louis?* Oh, it was impossible. They

might have gone for a few hours to storm some other point, but they could not have been withdrawn.

"These four big ones," Señor Warfield continued, "are the *Cristobal Colon*, the *Admiral Oquendo*, the *Maria Teresa*, and the *Vizcaya*. The small destroyers I do not know the names of. I just ran in to tell you the news, and must be off again. You will stay here, I suppose?"

"For the present," Gil answered, "till I see what positions they take. And I had better bid you good-by, Señor Warfield. My orders are positive to return the minute these ships arrive, and I may go at any time, after I see them anchored. I shall be under the fire of the forts in returning to my ship, and we may never meet again; but till my last hour I shall not forget the kindness you have shown me."

"Tush!" the Señor exclaimed. "We will meet again in an hour, for I shall run in to tell you what I hear, and it will take them half the morning to come to anchor. Adios!"

Gil would have given a good deal for the privilege of making a diagram on paper of the positions of the ships, but that was against orders; he must carry it all in his memory. And to avoid attracting attention to himself, he stretched out at full length on the floor of the balcony, and watched.

The whole harbor was literally at his feet, and every ship in plain sight; the only difficulty was that he

could not tell them apart — which was the *Vizcaya*, which the *Colon*, and so on. That was an important matter, for in case of a naval attack the officers must know from what quarter to expect the heaviest fire, and be prepared for it. It was not enough to say, "Here lies one ship, here another;" he must be able to make a chart when he returned, and announce, "Here is the *Oquendo*, here the *Teresa*."

In the course of an hour the ships had all either anchored or tied up to buoys in the harbor, but Señor Warfield had not returned. The city was wild with joy. Bells were still ringing, cannon firing, and the whole population seemed to be gathered on the wharves. In that great crowd there must be many people who could tell the ships apart, and Gil determined to go down and mingle with them to get his information.

He had only a few steps to go to reach the Embarcadero, or public landing place; but that was a solid mass of excited people, and he turned southward toward the Nautical Club, where the broader space was more open. Here the people were divided into little groups, each group having its spokesman who dilated upon the wonderful feat of the Spanish fleet in actually crossing the broad ocean without being either captured or sunk.

Approaching one of these groups to listen, he asked a question here, a question there, and had learned the names of all but two of the ships, when he turned to a

soldier on the outskirts of the group, and pointing out over the harbor, asked: —

"What is that second ship, the one lying just beyond the storeship?"

"What do you want to know for?" the soldier retorted, seizing him roughly by the shoulder. "You are asking a great many questions here; you must be very much interested. I think you will go with me to the guard-house."

It was so sudden and so unexpected that Gil was taken by surprise; but it did not take him long to recover himself. A crowd instantly gathered around them, and he heard ugly mutterings of: —

"A spy! A spy!"

He knew that in that excited crowd of highly excitable people, explanations or arguments would be of no avail; if he was to escape, it must be by force and daring.

If he was to escape! There was no room for any ifs or ands about it; he *must* escape, for his information was worth as much to the government as any battleship afloat.

Almost at the first instant he tried to wrench himself loose, but could not do it; the soldier had too firm a hold.

With a motion as if to strike the soldier with his free hand, he suddenly jerked his right arm out of the coat, then the other, and made a dash through the excited crowd.

"Stop him! stop him!" the soldier cried, springing after him; "a spy! a spy!"

Coatless, and now hatless, for he lost his hat in the scuffle, Gil made a dash for life and liberty up the Calle Cristina, followed by an ever increasing mob shouting: —

"A spy! A Yankee spy!"

He had a clear lead of ten feet from the foremost of them, and he was a good runner. They could not catch him, he knew, if the crowd in front did not stop him.

Never before had he felt so thankful for his hundred and sixty pounds of good solid flesh and bone. The lean little Cubans and Spaniards were like straws in front of him. One man who turned upon him he sent reeling with a blow from his fist; another, who tried to block his way, he dived into head first and left lying a helpless mass on the stones. Through a group here, past a crowd there, his hair dishevelled, his shirt torn, he made his run for life or death toward the small side door of the Almirez & Warfield warehouse.

It was injudicious to go there; he felt that, but it seemed his only chance. Within a dozen paces of the door he thrust a hand into his pocket and drew out his key.

They were close behind him now, for every encounter in the crowd had delayed him a little. One man in a broad sombrero was almost close enough to touch him;

and the cries grew louder every moment, "Stop the Yankee spy!"

He was in front of the door now, and another second would give him at least a temporary shelter. But that man so close behind! Suddenly Gil turned, and with the heavy key between his fingers dealt the man a blow that felled him like an ox.

The next two stumbled over this fallen man, and before the main body of pursuers came up he was inside, and the solid door locked, and the two wooden bars put up.

He was safe now for two or three minutes; but not more than that, for such a mob on such an occasion, he knew, would not stop at breaking down the doors or even battering down the walls to catch him. Already they were pounding and kicking at the door he had entered by.

He dashed through the corridor and up the stairs toward his room, fully conscious that his life hung by a thread. But still he felt wonderfully cool. His charge through the crowd had given him time to collect himself and lay his plans. He knew that the infuriated mob would tear him to pieces if they caught him; but through it all it was his information, more than his life, that he was determined to save if he could.

Señor Warfield had returned, and having heard the commotion below he stood at the head of the stairs listening.

"I am followed by a mob," Gil said hastily, but quite coolly, as he went into his room and put on a new coat and hat. "They are battering at the doors, and they will be in the building in one minute."

"Will they?" said Señor Warfield, quite as coolly as Gil, as he reached for his hip pocket and took out a large shining revolver. "Then the first five or six of them are dead men."

"No, do not oppose them," Gil said, in a manner that was more a command than a request. "Do not involve yourself in this thing. Go down and open the doors for them. They will not find me here. Adios, señor, if we do not meet again."

With the last words Gil's foot was upon the first of the iron steps leading to the roof, just as a tremendous crash below told him that the door had been battered down.

In two or three bounds he was on the roof balcony, only to find fresh trouble awaiting him.

Four men in the crowd, impatient at the strong resistance of the heavy doors, had climbed to the roof of the warehouse with the aid of the window sills and water-spout, and were running toward the higher part where Gil stood.

The warehouse was one story high, and roofed with corrugated iron. The living part where Gil was, was two stories high, and tiled. So he was still a story above his pursuers. A glance showed him that they

were all flourishing knives, which was conclusive evidence that they had no firearms.

With a bound he sprang over the balcony rail to the tiled part of the roof, which was nearly flat, and ran toward the edge which the men were approaching at a full run.

At sight of him they set up a shout of rage and triumph. They had found their prey, and there was no possible way for him to escape.

But in a second they changed their minds about that, when Gil whipped out his revolver and took as deliberate aim as if he had been shooting at a squirrel. There was no hesitation about him now. It was his life or theirs, and they must take their chances.

Crack, crack! four times, in such quick succession, so sharp and clear, that it sounded almost like a single shot.

Three of the men fell, and the fourth, with another cry, turned and ran back.

Gil ran rapidly along the edge of the roof to the side furthest from the water, and seizing the water-spout swung himself lightly down to the roof below.

But he could not wait to see whether the fourth man followed. In an instant he was at the edge of the warehouse roof. It was further to the ground than the other jump had been, and a broken leg or even a sprained ankle meant sure death. Seizing the water-pipe with one hand and the ends of the tiles with the

other, he stretched out his full length and let himself drop to the ground.

That back street was almost deserted. At most there were a half-dozen men and boys in it, for the great attractions were on the water side and at the front of the building with the crowd that was storming the great doors. And on the opposite side of the street, at the corner, stood an open cab, just as he anticipated — for in his leisure moments he had laid all his plans for even such an escape as this.

And more than that, there was a cabman, who had stepped out of his vehicle and was standing in the shade, leaning against the adjacent house, with his hands in his pockets. A big strong black horse, and a big stout cabman — those things Gil had noticed many times before.

In three bounds Gil was across the street and in the cab, and the reins were in one hand and the whip in the other, and he was off like the wind before cabby fairly got his hands out of his pockets.

He turned like a flash into the Calle de la Marina, which led inland up the hill, lashing the horse at every step, with cabby following, shouting, fifty yards behind, and a crowd of men and boys bringing up the rear.

But that fat cabby had no chance running up a hill against his own strong and fleet black horse. The crowd behind soon overtook and passed him, shouting "Stop thief! stop thief!" for they were ignorant of

the spy incident; and Gil for his own protection took up the cry himself, for the benefit of the wondering crowd in the street, and shouted "Stop thief!" as loudly as any of them, pointing ahead as if he were in hot pursuit of a criminal.

By the time he had gone five short blocks, with the horse running at the very top of his speed, and the crowd falling further behind every minute, he turned short to the right, into the Calle Alta de San Juan, and had no sooner turned the corner than he pulled the horse down into a fast trot. This not only attracted less attention in the street, but gave him a chance also to replace the exploded cartridges in his revolver.

No one who saw this well-dressed young man driving quietly but swiftly through the Calle de San Juan would have suspected for a moment how utterly desperate he was. No policeman, no soldier, no citizen or crowd of citizens could have interfered with his progress without a fight. He had made up his mind, from the first moment, that he should not be taken alive.

After the first turn his course zigzagged like a flight of stairs. From the Calle San Juan he turned to the left into the Calle Alta de San Basilio, then to the right into the Calle Alta del Calvario, and so on and on, always to the east and south, turning here, turning there, till his devious course brought him to the large open space in front of the Hospital Civil, or City Hospital.

By these many turns he threw his pursuers completely off the track. They saw him turn into a certain street, but when they reached that street he was not there, and they had no clew to follow.

A man who had been less conscientious about his work in Santiago might easily have tangled himself up among those narrow streets. But Gil not only knew what he was doing, but knew exactly where he was going. He even knew exactly where the little boat lay that was to carry him out to his ship. He might have gone on two blocks further with the carriage and turned toward the water into the Camino Laguna; but he knew that the Fort Saint Ursula was at the entrance to that road, and there he should be stopped. So he drove up in front of the Civil Hospital, as if he intended to make a visit there, and called to a little barefoot boy on the sidewalk: —

"Here, my boy! hold this horse a minute, will you?"

The boy took the horse by the bridle; and perhaps he is standing there holding him yet, for Gil has not seen him since. He walked rapidly around the hospital and turned into the Camino Azanazana, and followed that for a quarter of a mile or more, till he was well past the little fort that he knew lay by the side of the Laguna road, to the south of the St. Ursula Fort. Then he cut across among the trees and bushes to the Laguna road, which had been his objective point from

the start; and kept on and on, along the dusty, hot road, till he reached the brow of the steep declivity that fell off rapidly to the sea.

There was not a ship in sight! No *St. Louis*, no *Marblehead*, no gunboat. The sea was as beautifully blue and still and calm as a clear sky on a summer's day; but no vessel of any kind made a spot upon its glassy surface.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON BOARD THE ST. PAUL.

THAT deserted bit of water gave the young scout a greater start than even the sudden attack upon him on the wharf. Señor Warfield's report that the ships were gone had not alarmed him, for he could not believe that they were permanently withdrawn. They had been sent away on some brief duty, perhaps; but it was impossible that they should have deserted that important harbor.

But there was the evidence before his eyes. Not a ship on guard, and the long-sought Spanish fleet lying at anchor in the harbor. And for himself? He was utterly deserted. He had obeyed orders to the letter, had accomplished his object, and had information of the greatest importance to the government; but there was no one to give his information to. He could not return to Santiago. It seemed to him for a few moments as if, like the Roman soldier he had heard of, he must just stand there and die at his post.

When the first surprise was over, however, he soon came to a better frame of mind. It was of the highest

importance to our government, he reasoned, to find that Spanish fleet. No matter what false information they might have received, the ships must come here eventually, because here was the fleet they sought. Some business that he knew nothing about must have taken the ships away, but they would surely return. It was just possible, he thought, that the *St. Louis* had seen the Spanish fleet going in, and had hurried away to give the alarm.

"A cup of coffee in the morning makes a good foundation," he said to himself, "specially when a big roll goes with it. I am good for all day to-day without any trouble; to-morrow I shall be desperately hungry, but that's nothing; and the next day I shall begin to grow weak; but I can stick it out. Here is the post of duty, and here I shall stay for three days and nights unless the ships come."

He looked about for a safe shelter, and found it in a beautiful avocado tree about fifty feet from where he stood, so thick with dark green foliage that he was sure he could lie safe among its branches. He selected as comfortable a place as he could find among the lower limbs, and lay there hour after hour, with nothing to do but watch and think; and he thought enough to fill a whole shelfful of volumes: about his narrow escape, and the treacherous Spanish lady, and his life in Santiago, and about the *St. Louis* and his comrades on her, and home and the loved ones there. Where was the

St. Louis? he wondered. And what were they doing at home? and what would they say if they knew where he was at that moment, and what he had been through that morning?

It is easy to say of a person that he lay for hours watching on the limbs of a tree; but when it comes to the actual experience it is very unpleasant work. He was growing stiff and tired and a little thirsty, when at about four o'clock, as nearly as he could guess the time, he saw something that instantly changed the current of his thoughts.

There was a tiny patch of smoke on the horizon, far away to the eastward! It looked hardly bigger than his hat, and was very faint, but it was enough to show that there was a steamer in that neighborhood.

There were tremendous possibilities in that whiff of smoke. It might mean one of the American ships coming back, or it might be an enemy, or it might — well, there was no use speculating about it; he could only wait and see.

He was so anxious that it was painful, and he determined to shut his eyes till he could slowly count five hundred, to see what change there would be in the signs. Hurrah! when he opened his eyes, the patch of smoke had lengthened out into a long trail, such as a steamer makes when under way. And the smoke was coming nearer.

Another five hundred. Better yet. There was a little

black speck under the smoke now. The steamer was approaching.

In less than an hour she was in plain sight, for she came very fast. And how Gil did strain his eyes to make her out! Her coming so fast looked as if she might be one of the American flyers; his own *St. Louis*, perhaps.

"It's the *Saint*, as sure as I'm alive!" he exclaimed.

She was opposite the harbor entrance by this time, about four miles out; consequently five miles from Gil. But should he not know his own ship? Could he be mistaken in her shape, her rigging, the very way she cut the water?

Her engines stopped, smoke stopped pouring from her funnels, and gradually, very gradually, she swung around to wind and tide. And as she did so, and presented her broadsides, Gil nearly fell out of the tree.

The ship out in the offing was painted the naval lead-color, like the men-of-war.

The *St. Louis* still wore her original coat of black.

Consequently this ship was not the *St. Louis*, but her sister ship, the *St. Paul!*

Here was a new mystery, but Gil did not try to fathom it. It was enough for him to know that there lay an American ship (didn't his heart jump when he saw the stars and stripes flying at her stern!) and that it was his business to get out to her.

As he slid down from his perch it occurred to him

that possibly he ought to wait till after dark. He must row the whole distance under the fire of the forts; and it was not his life, but his information, that he must save. But he thought of the exact wording of his orders: —

"Return immediately to the ship if Cervera's fleet arrives." Not come that night, or as soon as he could, but come immediately.

"They can't hit me," he said to himself, and went across the fields to a path that he had travelled before, and followed the path down the steep hill to the lagoon, and along the edge of the lagoon, past a fisherman's hut, to a log that was staked up to the shore for a wharf, where, as he knew, a boat was tied.

Gil's last act in Cuba, on that visit, was one of justice and honesty. That boat belonged to a poor fisherman, who doubtless made a living with her by fishing at night. By taking the boat he might deprive the man and his family of their livelihood. It was a small, rough boat, hardly worth more than four or five dollars; but he took his last ten-dollar gold piece, supplied to him a few days before by Señor Warfield, and stuck it edgewise in a crack in the log, in plain sight.

Taking up the oars he pushed off, and rowed swiftly through the lagoon into the little bay beyond; then into the open ocean.

For a few minutes the cliffs concealed him, but he was soon in plain sight of all the forts. Either they

did not see him for a considerable time, or paid no attention to him, for he was half-way out to the ship before a single shot was fired. Then the Estrella battery, inside the harbor, opened upon him with one of her rapid-fire guns, and the Morro itself began to fire.

"Try it again, Mr. Don!" he laughed, without trying to increase his speed; "if you hit me, it will be an accident."

What he most feared was that the American ship might open upon him; for in those days in Cuban waters American ships were cautious, and let nothing approach them.

He was within a mile of the ship now, and having turned his head a moment to look ahead, he was delighted to see that the *St. Paul*, instead of firing, was lowering a launch to intercept him, when there was a tremendous jerk on his right arm, and he almost went backward off the seat.

A ball, probably from the Estrella battery, had struck the blade of his oar as he raised it for a stroke, and shattered it to splinters.

"Upon my word, those fellows are improving!" he said to himself, very coolly, as he threw away the useless oar and began to paddle with the other.

The men in the launch evidently had no better opinion than Gil of Spanish gunnery, for they advanced steadily and swiftly, and were soon within hailing distance.

"Ahoy, there, in the boat!" an officer in the stern shouted. "Who are you?"

"A friend!" Gil shouted back, still paddling.

The sun had set by this time, and in the waning light objects were a little indistinct. The officer was not satisfied with the answer, and ran the launch directly across the boat's bow, effectually stopping her progress.

"What do you want?" he asked.

Gil instantly dropped his oar and stood up. He was in the hands of friends, and their English words sounded like music to his ears.

"I am Cadet Engineer Standish, of the *St. Louis*," he said, as distinctly as he could, "with important information for Captain Sigsbee."

This was evidently a surprise to the officer in the launch, and he sat down for a moment to confer with the officer by his side. They were not to blame for being suspicious, for Gil still looked like a young Cuban.

"Are you going back to shore in that boat?" the officer asked at length.

"Not if I can help it, sir!" Gil laughed. And that good American laugh did the business for him, for the officer knew that it came from neither Cuban nor Spaniard.

"Then let her go, and come in here with us," he ordered; and Gil obeyed willingly enough.

As they headed for the ship the officer began to ply him with questions, but he could only answer that he had been detached on secret service and was not at liberty to speak.

"I should like to ask, though, sir," he said, "what has become of my ship, and how the *St. Paul* comes to be here."

"We passed the *St. Louis* at midnight last night," the officer replied, "heading for New York. She was ordered home to receive more guns, and we are sent here to take her place. The *Marblehead* and the others have gone to Manzanillo."

Gil dared not speak; but those few words explained everything to him. The *St. Paul* had been sent to relieve the *St. Louis*, and there had been an unguarded interval of nearly twelve hours. And in that interval Cervera's fleet had crept into Santiago harbor!

When he reached the ship he was left standing on deck for a few moments while word was taken aft, and presently a steward came to say that Captain Sigsbee was engaged, but that Lieutenant-Commander Driggs would see him.

Gil was prepared for this. It was very presumptuous, under ordinary circumstances, for a cadet engineer to expect to be received by the commander-in-chief of a warship. But these were no ordinary circumstances.

"Please say to Captain Sigsbee," he told the steward, "that I have just come from the Spanish fleet."

Ah, that was a very different matter! Seventy millions of Americans were waiting anxiously for news of the Spanish fleet; and the greatest captain or commodore or admiral in the navy was not too busy to talk with the man who had just left it. In two minutes more he was standing inside the door of Captain Sigsbee's room, giving the naval salute.

"Come in, Engineer Standish; and be good enough to close the door after you," said the gallant officer who commanded the *Maine* when she was blown up in Havana harbor; "I hear you bring important information."

"Yes, sir," Gil replied, stepping up to the big table on the other side of which the captain was sitting. "The Spanish fleet entered Santiago harbor last night, sir."

If he expected any exclamations of surprise, or joy, or anything else, from the captain, he was disappointed. Indeed, Captain Sigsbee did not reply at all, in words. He simply got up and stepped to the side of the room and blew a long blast into a speaking-tube, which went, as it proved, to the chief engineer's room.

"Keep full steam up till further orders," Gil heard him direct through the tube; and then he returned to his seat.

"Now, engineer," he began, "take that chair, and tell me your whole story as clearly as you can."

Gil told everything, without reserve, and ended by drawing a very correct chart of Santiago harbor, on which he marked the exact position of each Spanish ship.

"You have done wonderfully good service, engineer, wonderfully good!" the captain said, as he looked over the chart.

Then he began to walk nervously up and down the floor.

"It's an ugly position — a very ugly position!" he muttered to himself. "Four cruisers and two destroyers. H'm! Yes, very ugly."

He stepped up to a bell-button and pushed it, and in a moment, after a summons from a steward, an officer came in.

"Cervera's fleet got into the harbor here this morning, lieutenant," he said. "This young man from the *St. Louis* has just come from there. Move the ship up a mile nearer the castle, and keep the search-light turned on the harbor mouth. And have the largest steam launch ready to start for Manzanillo in twenty minutes. I shall send you in the launch, engineer," (turning to Gil) "to explain matters to Commander McCalla. The *Marblehead* ought to be at Manzanillo, and some smaller vessels that can be despatched for the fleet. We must have help here."

"Help!" repeated the lieutenant, who had just reached the door. "We are alone, and almost

unarmored. What can we do if the ships come out?"

"Do!" retorted Captain Sigsbee, with a Remember-the-*Maine* look in his eyes; "there is only one thing to do. If they come out, I shall fight the fleet, of course."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THREE DAYS' FURLOUGH.

WITHIN three days after Gil's escape from Santiago, the sea in front of the harbor-mouth was alive with warships. And grand as was the scene by day, it was tame compared with the magnificent spectacle at night, when every ship in that noble fleet directed its powerful search-light upon the narrow entrance to that harbor in which the Spanish ships had taken refuge, and from which they were not to be allowed to escape without a battle.

In the city itself the people were so joyful that they took Admiral Cervera in triumph to the Cathedral, where the highest officials of the Church offered thanks for the "deliverance" of the Spanish fleet.

But Gil was not destined to see any of these great things. The *St. Paul's* launch took him with all speed to Manzanillo, where he had to retell his story to Commander McCalla, and draw another map of the harbor showing the positions of the ships.

"I knew you would do it, young man!" the commander said, clapping him heartily on the shoulder.

"I saw it was in you before you started. But you hardly know how great this news is that you bring. That fleet is retired; it is dead! it might as well be at the bottom of the ocean!"

"This is a great service that you have rendered," he went on, refusing to allow Gil to say a word; "a great and dangerous service, and you shall be rewarded for it. It is not in my power at the moment to say just how, but I shall see myself that you are rewarded."

"I do not look for any re—" for any reward, Gil was going to say; but the commander instantly silenced him.

"Hold on now! I'll do the talking myself. Within ten minutes I am off for Santiago, but not until I send a boat to the fastest transport here, which I shall order at once to Key West for reënforcements. And you shall go with her. Your work on shore is finished, and I shall send you to New York to rejoin your ship. Here is an order that will pass you from Key West to Tampa on the passenger ship, and from Tampa to New York by rail. That is the first thing I can do for you. It is only a small part of the debt that the government owes you."

On Sunday, the twenty-second of May, Gil stepped ashore from the transport at Key West. Though a brave sailor, he was still the same dutiful boy, and his first visit on American soil was to the telegraph office, where he sent this message to his mother:—

"MRS. G. W. STANDISH, Cairo, N.Y.: —

"Just arrived here safe and well. In New York Wednesday. Then home if possible.

"GILBERT STANDISH."

The fast little steamer *Mascotte* carried him to Port Tampa, where he had the first intimation that his news had preceded him by wire. Much to his surprise, an orderly was waiting for him on the wharf, with the message that Captain Brady wished to see him immediately in the New York sleeper.

He was taken into the car, and into the drawing-room at the end of the car, where he soon learned some new things about a government's secret service in war time.

"I am the President's confidential agent," Captain Brady said, as soon as they had shaken hands, "and he has directed me to get your account of the arrival of the Spanish fleet at Santiago, for his own use. We have only a half-hour to talk till I get off at Tampa, so we must lose no time."

Once more Gil went over his whole story and drew his plan of the harbor; and as Captain Brady left the train at the Tampa Bay Hotel, he hardly knew what to do or say when he was informed that by the President's order that drawing-room had been reserved for his use to New York.

The progress of the train was both too fast and too

slow for him. He had never travelled in a sleeping-car before, much less had the entire drawing-room to himself. And yet—! Visions of home insisted upon coming up before him, and his old room on the *St. Louis*.

At Jacksonville, at Savannah, at all the larger cities they passed through, he bought papers giving the latest war news; and by the time they reached Baltimore he found that the news he brought had changed the entire conduct of the war. Before, everything had been "On to Havana!" But now that was changed, and an army was preparing for the capture of Santiago, fleet and all. The newspapers were not entirely sure yet that the Spanish fleet was there; "there was every reason to believe" that it was there; whereby Gil saw that the naval officers did not tell quite all they knew.

As he approached New York, the latest papers told him that the *St. Louis* was lying already at her old pier in the city, where she was taking on, not more guns, but a fresh supply of coal and provisions, to last her for a long vigil, if necessary, before Santiago. Her orders had been changed through the very news that Gil had obtained.

It was early in the morning when his train rolled into Jersey City; and as the pier was almost adjoining the ferry, he lost no time there. Fortunately Captain Goodrich was on board, and Gil had an opportunity

to see him as soon as he had exchanged his Cuban clothes for his usual uniform. His brief interview with the commander must have been very satisfactory, for on the way up to the Grand Central Station he stopped to telegraph to his mother: —

"Will be home in noon train, on three days' furlough."

How familiar everything looked as he travelled over the little railroad from Catskill to Cairo! Old Blackhead had never seemed such a good friend before. And Roundtop, in its fresh coat of green. His heart thumped as the train drew up at the station; and in another minute he was pulled this way and that by the crowd of friends who had come to greet him.

"Oh, Gil!" was all that his mother could say as she clung to the neck of her boy-hero. And Rose seemed determined never to let him go; and Mrs. William J. showed her delight; and D. K. Stevens at the head of a throng of the boys and young men of Cairo, with an immense bouquet of flowers that must have been hard to find among the Catskills at that time of year.

"It's not the welcome we meant to give you, Gil!" said D. K. "But your mother wouldn't let us do any more."

"What do you think these foolish boys wanted to do?" Mrs. Standish asked, as soon as she could get in a word. "They were going to have the Cairo band

out to escort you to the house. But I knew you wouldn't want that."

"The band!" Gil exclaimed; "well, I should think not. What on earth put that in their heads?"

"Oh, don't put on too much modesty, Mr. Engineer!" D. K. laughed. "We know all about you. I guess Cairo has done her part in this war, and all through you. What does this mean, then?"

He took from his pocket a newspaper of the day before, folded down to a small compass, and held before Gil's face a small paragraph marked with ink, under the heading "Naval Orders": —

"Cadet Engineer Gilbert Standish of the auxiliary cruiser *St. Louis* is recommended for promotion for meritorious conduct on special duty. (Second mention in general orders.)"

"Well, that's news to me!" Gil exclaimed, turning red. "I haven't heard a word of it before. But come along; we must go home all the same."

"The boys" thoughtfully left him to his family, except that as he went down the station steps D. K. waved his hat and shouted: —

"Three cheers for Cairo's hero, Gil Standish!"

They were given with a will, and Gil took off his hat in return; not puffed up with so much attention, but rather glad to escape so easily.

He had not been gone long enough this time to find many changes; and he would have hung his hat on the

rack as if he had just been down the street, if Rose had not prevented him by force from doing anything for himself.

"The idea!" she exclaimed; "and you just back from Santiago! Now don't waste any time about it, Gil, but do sit right down and tell us what on earth you were doing in Santiago. We got your letter, such a funny little letter, and it frightened us all out of a year's growth."

"Oh, give the boy time to catch his breath, Rose," his mother expostulated. "Here's the big rocking-chair waiting for you, Gil, with a soft cushion in it. Oh, I'm so glad!" And to prove how glad she was she threw her arms once more about his neck and fairly moistened his vest with her tears.

"Well, I don't see that there's anything to cry over," said the matter-of-fact Mrs. William J. "He's been to the war and done his duty, and now he's home again. It's all right, isn't it?"

"Of course it is!" Rose whimpered; "don't cry, Aunty!" and immediately clapped her handkerchief to her face to conceal her own tears.

But these were tears of that happy kind that give place readily to laughter; and when Gil began his story of Santiago, as they compelled him to do at once, they were too much interested either to laugh or cry.

When he told them how he stood for two days on

deck under the blazing sun to acquire the real Cuban color, Rose interrupted with : —

"Oh, *that's* why you're so black, is it? I thought if everybody got as dark as you are down in Cuba, I didn't care to go there to live."

"Ah! but you'd better wait till you see the place, *our* place, down there, before you talk!" Gil laughed. "There's nothing like it anywhere about here, I tell you. Why, there are more rooms in that house — but hold on; I'm getting ahead of my story. We'll come to that presently."

"Yes, let him tell us his story, Rose," Mrs. Standish said. "But what is the use of talking about that place, Gil? Do you really think we are ever going to come into our own?"

"Yes, I do, mother," he answered. "I can't say just how or when, for so far the war has made little difference in the situation. But it is right that we should have it, and I believe the right will come out on top in the end. There's no telling what may happen before the war is over, and I firmly believe we shall come into possession of that property. Now that Cervera's fleet is safely fastened up in Santiago harbor —"

"What!" they all exclaimed at once. "Cervera at Santiago! How do you know that?"

"Well, I ought to know something about it," he said, crossing his legs comfortably and looking thoughtfully

at the fire. "That was what I was there for, and I didn't leave till I had counted his ships in the harbor. But look here! You may as well say nothing about that outside, for a while. I see the department has not made public the news I brought; and it is just as well not to talk too much. Of course it is very important news, or the President wouldn't have brought me North in the drawing-room of a sleeper."

"The President!" Gil was getting in deeper and deeper, for every one of these great things had to be explained, and it was the hardest thing in the world for him to tell his story connectedly. Dinner had been eaten before the narrative was finished; and he had hardly concluded before he had to begin all over again, for the neighbors thought the family had had time enough for their greetings, and they flocked in till the sitting-room was so full that Rose had to go and build a fire in the parlor.

"This is the liveliest war I ever *did* see," D. K. Stevens declared, after everything had been well talked over, except the arrival of the Spanish fleet, which Gil did not mention; "and I believe you're the liveliest fellow in it, Gil. Why, it's not four weeks yet since you sailed from New York, and here you've been in dear knows how many fights, been all over Cuba among the Spaniards, and been twice mentioned in general orders. You'll come home 'Admiral Standish' when the war is over."

"No fear of that!" Gil modestly declared. "You see on the auxiliary cruisers we are not part of the real navy. We are sworn in, to be sure, but we are hardly in the line of promotion outside of our own ships. Besides, there are a thousand better men than I am on the cruisers."

It was not till nearly bedtime that they had a chance for further talk among themselves, and then Gil insisted upon hearing how things had been going at home.

"Just as well as they could with you away!" his mother declared. "Mr. Merrifield and all his family are coming on Saturday, to spend the summer. He says the government has taken nearly all their ships, and there is not much for him to do. If only our Gil were not going away again, we could be perfectly happy."

"Oh, he'll not be away a great while," Rose interrupted; "this war is not going to last very long."

"Now you're talking solid sense, sissy!" Gil laughed. "Few people know how nearly this war is over. The Spaniards have lost their Pacific fleet, and now their best fleet is as good as gone at Santiago (Commander McCalla says so himself), and they will have only one poor little fleet left that two or three of our ships can easily handle. Then how can they get supplies to Cuba? The war will be over inside of three months; and then maybe — only *maybe*, mind you — we will go down and take possession of one of the best coffee

plantations in Cuba. Don't you let anything happen to the old black trunk, mother, and the papers it contains. They may be very useful some day. I can't see yet how it is coming about, but it will come."

He could hardly realize that he was "turning in" in his own bed, with no watches to stand, no fear of being taken for a Yankee spy. And yet — and yet — when he awoke in the morning he could not help thinking, "It *is* kind of handy to have a young darky to bring your coffee and have your fresh clothes all ready in the morning. I think the folks will enjoy Cuban life, if we ever get down there."

One of the tasks that Gil set for himself occupied a large part of his brief stay in Cairo. The time might come, he thought, when he should be able at least to put in a claim for the Standish plantation; and when it did come he should need the papers to show. But the original deeds were too precious to be risked on a cruiser in war-time; and he set to work to copy them all, and have the copies attested before a notary public. Rose gave him all the assistance she could, but it was a long and difficult work.

He could not walk down the street as far as Jason's store without being stopped fifty times to shake hands with friends; and when the last day of his furlough came, he had to say his last farewells in the midst of a crowd at the station.

"I don't pity you a bit; I envy you," Rose found an

opportunity to whisper in his ear at the last moment. "I wish I could go along. You don't know how many rolls of bandages I have sent for the wounded soldiers, Gil, but I hope you won't need any of them."

"My dear boy, do try to keep out of danger!" his mother begged. "And don't forget who has spared your life so far!"

"Here, Gil!" D. K. shouted at the open car window as the train moved off; "it's not army food, but a reminder of old times."

The little box he handed in proved afterwards to be filled with sticks of candy from the showcase in the store — sassafras, and cinnamon, wintergreen, lemon, and mint; and Gil ate them as contentedly as if he had not been the hero of Guantanamo, going to renew his fierce conflict with the Spaniards.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE YOUNG HERO'S REWARD.

MAY had been a busy month in the war; but June was to be more busy still; and July? Ah, the blood will jump in the veins of your great-grand-children when they read of the events of the early days of July, 1898. There was no Hobson in May, no *Merrimac*, no historic despatch from Sampson before Santiago, coming while we were shooting our firecrackers on the lawn, "I send the nation for a Fourth of July present the news of the destruction of the entire Spanish fleet!"

But considering the absence of these heroic things, we were doing very well even in the closing days of May. Gil, for his part, resumed his old duty in charge of the refrigerating plant of the *St. Louis*, but with a very different standing in the service than he had begun with. Whether he was to be promoted to anything better or not, he did not know; but he was left no room to doubt that he had earned the approbation and good will of his superiors.

"You did credit to the ship and the whole navy,

while you were in Cuba," Captain Goodrich said to him on his return. "When we capture or destroy that fleet, as we certainly shall, you can feel that you had as much to do with it as any commodore in the navy. I shall have to put you back at your old work for the present, because there is nothing better for you. You know how hard it is in this branch of the service to do justice to the men who distinguish themselves. But your turn will come, in some shape or other. You have made some excellent friends, and they will not forget you."

It amused Gil to see how differently Jack Knowles and Tom Hunter treated him when he went back to his work. It was almost as if Captain Goodrich or Commander McCalla had come into their department to superintend the little engine. But the best of all, he thought, was when Ben Hanway came into the stateroom to give him a welcome back.

"Put it right there, Standish!" he said, holding out a great brawny hand stained with grease; "you're a trump, in every sense of the word. There ain't a man on the ship but's glad to see you back — though most of us didn't think we ever should see you again. What did you do with the clothes I dressed that Cuban boy up in?"

"Oh, they're scattered around different parts of Santiago," Gil laughed.

"Then you went without clothes, I suppose?"

"Not exactly. I blossomed out into a great Cuban

swell after that. Why, Ben, I've left one of the best outfits of thin clothes down there you ever saw."

"All right," said Ben, clapping him on the shoulder. "We'll go right down and get them. We're off to-night for Santiago direct."

"I know it," Gil answered. "And how queer it will seem to be anchored off there again, now that I know the city so well."

But when they reached there, on the second of June, it seemed strange for more reasons than that. For miles off the Morro Castle the sea looked like a great city. Such a fleet had never been seen in service in the Western Hemisphere before. All day long signals waved from the great steel warships, and all night their search-lights made shore and water as bright as day.

And on the very next night Hobson immortalized himself by sinking the *Merrimac* across the mouth of the harbor. Gil was too generous even to regret that he was not back in time to make one of the crew. "Now if they want a hero," he said to himself, "there's one for them!"

But the *St. Louis* was not destined to remain all the time with the fleet. On the eighth of June Gil assisted once more in shelling the forts of Caimanera. On the tenth he was off Morant Point, Jamaica, with a Spanish merchantman prize they had captured. Then came much scouting service, and on the 28th they chased the *Antonio Lopez* ashore at Punta Salinas.

On the first day of July the *St. Louis* again started north for more guns, but several little matters interfered with her plans. On the second she captured the British sloop *Wary*, a blockade-runner from Kingston for Cape Cruz; and she might have handed her over to some other ship if orders had not come for her to return at once to Santiago.

On the Fourth of July, steaming swiftly along the south coast of Cuba, Gil saw his old friends the Spanish ships again, ashore, burning, half sunken, deserted, battered almost beyond recognition by American shells. Those ships that had steamed so proudly into Santiago harbor a few weeks before were smoking wrecks, their crews killed or captured, and Admiral Cervera himself a prisoner.

The *St. Louis* did not by her unfortunate absence lose all participation in this great victory, for she carried the Spanish prisoners, Admiral Cervera included, to Portsmouth, and on the 14th of July sailed from Portsmouth for Annapolis to land Admiral Cervera there. And on that very day Santiago surrendered to General Shafter's victorious army, and the war was practically at an end.

When the Spaniards asked for peace, twelve days later, and General Wood was appointed military governor of Santiago, it did look very much as if all chance for promotion was gone. Worse than that, Gil could not see how the outcome of the war was to be of any

advantage to him in regaining possession of the plantation. Cuba was not to belong to the Americans, but to the Cubans; and they might be as bad to deal with as the Spaniards.

"I have a great notion to show these papers to Captain Goodrich," he said to himself one day, as the *St. Louis* was crossing over from Porto Rico to Santiago. "I should like to know what he thinks of the prospects, anyhow."

Captain Goodrich was always so willing to grant him any favor in his power that he felt sure he should not be refused; and he was right. The captain listened to Gil's account of how they had been deprived of their property, and said, as he put the copies of the deeds in his pocket: —

"I don't know much about such things myself, engineer; but I am to meet General Wood and Admiral Sampson in Santiago to-morrow, and I will explain the case to them and see whether they can do anything. Our flag has considerable influence in Cuba just now, you know."

It struck Gil that there was something peculiar in the captain's manner of speaking; but there was so little chance of anything coming of it that he soon gave his attention to other things. It was not till the following evening, when the ship lay close under Morro Castle, and the captain had just returned from the city in the launch, that it was recalled to his memory by a summons from the captain's steward: —

"Captain Goodrich wishes to see you in his room, sir!"

"Very good," Gil answered; "I will be there immediately;" and he only took time to brush his hair and wash the worst of the oil from his hands.

"I laid your real estate claim before General Wood to-day, engineer," the captain immediately began, "and he has kept the papers for examination. Meanwhile I have brought you an order from headquarters."

He held out an unsealed envelope as he spoke, which Gil took, though he was so surprised that he hardly knew what to do with it. At the captain's suggestion he took out its contents and read: —

"SANTIAGO, CUBA, Aug. 2, 1898.

"Cadet Engineer Gilbert Standish, of the Auxiliary Cruiser *St. Louis*, is detached from that ship and assigned to shore duty. To report to General Wood, Military Governor of Santiago, without delay.

"SAMPSON,
"Commanding U. S. fleet before Santiago."

"Detached from the ship!" Gil exclaimed; "does that mean that I am to leave her permanently, sir?"

"Well, you can put your own interpretation upon the order," the captain replied, smiling. "I think, though, if I were you, I should take all my effects ashore and be prepared for a long stay."

This was such a surprise to the young engineer, that for a minute or two he stood reading the order over and over.

"And does it mean that I am to go ashore to-night, sir?" he asked at length.

"Oh, I think you need hardly go to-night. I imagine that to-morrow morning will be without delay."

"I hope my service on the ship has not been unsatisfactory, sir?" Gil ventured to ask.

"Quite the contrary!" the captain declared, in a tone that left Gil no chance to doubt his sincerity. "Your service on the ship and on shore has been excellent, and I shall much regret to see you leave us.

"I see you are very much surprised at this order," he continued, "so I will relieve your mind by telling you that Commander McCalla was present at my conference with General Wood and Admiral Sampson to-day, and he had a great deal to say about you. In fact, it was he who, with my consent, asked the admiral for this order. And as the commander is a great admirer of yours, you may rest assured that it was done for your benefit. It is almost impossible, in this branch of the service, to reward suitably a man who distinguishes himself on duty — impossible, that is, in the way of regular promotion. But when an admiral and the military governor of a province unite in desiring to honor one of their subordinates, you may be sure they can always find a way. Now that is as strong a hint as

I can give you. Be ready to say good-by to the *St. Louis* early to-morrow morning, and I will send you ashore in the launch."

More mystified than ever, Gil saluted and retired, and spent the remainder of the evening in packing his clothes and saying good-by to his friends. He had had no idea, up to that moment, how much he was attached to the ship and the gallant comrades with whom he had sailed so long and by whose side he had been so often under fire. But there was the order from the admiral himself; and there was nothing for him to do but pack and go.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OWNER IN POSSESSION.

"WAIT a moment, Standish! I don't want you to report to me just yet."

That was the odd reception that Gil met from General Wood when he entered his office on the morning of August third and began to speak.

"There is no immediate hurry about that," he went on. "After you report to me you will be subject to my orders; and I don't want you under my orders at present. You can enjoy the novelty of being a plain American citizen for a little while. Draw up that chair, will you; I want to talk about this plantation of yours."

"Not exactly mine, sir; but I have a claim upon it," Gil answered, as he drew up the chair and sat down.

The military governor of Santiago seemed, somehow, to pay very little attention to that remark. It was evident from his manner that he had made up his mind what was to be said and done.

"Let us first make sure of the identity of this place," he began. "It is the large place with a tower on

one corner, standing on the summit of a hill, well out to the eastward, is it?"

"Yes, sir, that is it; La Sierra, or of later years the Standish plantation."

"Precisely," the governor resumed. "I have looked over your papers, and it seems to me that the heirs of the two Standish brothers are the legal owners of the place. But that we need not consider at present. Now tell me, my boy, who is in possession of that place?"

"No one, sir; it is deserted and empty," Gil answered.

"Well, now remember that I am not talking to you in my official capacity, but simply as a fellow-countryman, when I say that possession is a very important matter. At present you have only a claim upon the property; but if you were to take possession, the Spaniard would have the claim (a very weak one, I think), and the burden of proving his title would fall upon him. Does that suggest anything to your mind?"

"It certainly does, sir!" Gil exclaimed. "It tells me that the best thing I can do is to go out and take possession of the place at once."

"Then I can tell you officially," the governor went on, "that that place is needed for the uses of the Provincial Government, and that if I can find the owner of it (that is, for my purposes, the person in actual possession), I will lease it from him. Of course I have authority to seize it, but in this case I prefer to

rent. I think you are too bright a young man to misunderstand me. You can come in at ten o'clock tomorrow morning, and if you are then in possession, we will talk about terms. Later in the day you can report to me and receive your orders."

With a thousand new ideas whirling in his head Gil started to go; but the governor stopped him at the door.

"I think you will be in no danger out there," he said, "for the country is quiet. But if you have need of protection, get a message to me, and I will send you a guard."

This all came so suddenly, so "in a heap," as Gil said to himself, that he could not at the moment make head or tail of it. But one thing he could do; he knew a quiet haven of rest in Santiago, where he could sit down and think it out with the help of a friend in whom he had every confidence.

In five minutes he was in front of the Almirez & Warfield warehouse. But there was no going to the little side door and ringing for Rafael to let him in, as he had expected. The iron shutters were all swung back, the big doors stood wide open, and people were going in and out. For the stars and stripes waved over the city hall, and business had come to life.

"Well, Standish!" Señor Warfield exclaimed, when Gil presented himself in the counting-room, "how glad I am to see you back! I was sure you'd be here

sooner or later. Your clothes are all just as you left them upstairs."

"I was sure of that, too!" Gil laughed; "and I shall put some of them on, for this heavy uniform is roasting me. And I have great news, señor, though I don't know yet exactly what it means. I think maybe you can tell me. It may be that I have come to Cuba to stay."

"You couldn't tell me better news than that, Standish!" the merchant exclaimed. "You're just the sort of young American we want down here. Come upstairs to our old den and tell me all about it."

Upstairs Gil had another cordial welcome to receive from Rafael; and then they sat down, and he told his whole long story to Señor Warfield — about his father and uncle, and the plantation, and his diving for the cable at Caimanera, and his being twice mentioned in general orders, and the good friends he had made among the commanders of the fleet.

"Well, upon my word!" the señor cried, when Gil finished. "And you never gave me a hint of what a hero I had in the house! But it's all plain enough now. Don't you see that they have found a way to show that they appreciate your services? General Wood! Why, man alive, you don't know what an autocrat General Wood is in this town. A military governor is as absolute a monarch as the Czar of Russia. If he says you're to have possession of that plantation,

the thing is done. It's the greatest chance I ever heard of, to get your land back without the expense of a long lawsuit. But you deserve it, Standish! You earned it by the way you fought your way out of Santiago, if in no other way."

"But what can the government want with the place?" Gil asked.

"Ah, that I can't say," the señor answered. "But you will find out in due time. When Governor Wood is looking out for you, you don't need to worry your head about anything, my boy. Now let me lay out a plan for you. Shall I?"

"That's just what I hoped you would do," Gil replied.

"Then after breakfast we will have Rafael load a basket with provisions and two or three hammocks, and we will drive out to the plantation and spend the night there, and that will put you in possession. After that you will do just as Governor Wood tells you, of course. By the way, have you plenty of money? You must consider me your banker now till you are settled in Cuba."

"Oh, I have plenty for the present, thank you," Gil answered. "And I should like to ask you, señor, — was there any fault found about the money I spent while I was here before?"

"Fault found!" the señor repeated; "what, over paying a few gold pieces for the greatest news of the

war? Well, I should think not! Why, if there had been three more ciphers added to the amount, my boy, that news would have been cheap to the government. Oh, no! that little bill was paid without a word."

A few hours later their hammocks were swung on the great front piazza of the Standish plantation house, and Gil, with his hat off, made formal announcement that he took possession of the property in the name of the legal owners. They had nothing better than an empty barrel for a dinner table; but that did not interfere with their enjoyment of the meal, nor with a refreshing night's sleep in the soft breeze fresh from the Caribbean Sea; and in the morning Rafael was left behind to keep possession until Governor Wood's intentions were known.

"Now, young man," the governor began, when Gil presented himself at ten o'clock, "am I to understand that I am talking to the owner in possession of the Standish plantation?"

"Yes, sir," Gil answered; "I found the place deserted yesterday afternoon, and took possession before witnesses."

"Very well, then," the governor continued. "I want that place for a signal station. All vessels passing to or from the eastward are to be sighted and reported from there; and in a few months the home government will probably establish a signal service bureau there. How much land is there?"

"About seven thousand acres, sir," Gil answered.

"A large tract," the governor resumed, "and a fine large house. I can offer you two hundred and fifty dollars a month for the use of the premises. Is that satisfactory?"

Whether satisfactory or not, it was such a surprise that it nearly took Gil off his feet. But, fortunately, the governor was not the man to wait long for a reply.

"Very well, then," he said, using his favorite expression, "I will have a lease drawn, and it can be signed later on. And now that this matter is settled, you may report for duty."

Gil stood up and gave a military salute, and said that he reported to General Wood under orders received from Admiral Sampson.

"You are assigned to duty in the signal service," the governor announced, in a more "official" and commanding tone than he used before, "and will continue to hold the rank and pay of a cadet engineer until further orders. You are directed to take charge of the signal station to be established to-morrow on the property known as the Standish plantation, and of the guard of forty men that will be sent there. The details of your duty you will receive from the assistant adjutant general."

Gil's face was red, but he merely raised his hand to his forehead in salute; for a commanding officer must not be thanked for the orders he gave.

"I want to caution you particularly, engineer," the governor went on, "about keeping the premises in such order as a government station demands. I shall select mechanics, as far as possible, to make up your guard, — masons, carpenters, painters, and so on, — and I expect you to keep them busy. If any of the buildings are in bad order, put them in repair. The fences and walls must all be repaired. The whole place, in fact, must be renovated. You are to dispose of your men in such a way as not to interfere with the owner and his family if they choose to occupy the greater part of the house. Good day, engineer."

After another salute Gil found himself somehow out in the corridor, and then in the hot street. He understood it all now, but the details of the arrangement lost themselves in a sort of mist in his whirling brain. It was not so much the plantation he was thinking of, not even the renovated plantation house put in thorough order, as a certain little wooden house far away under the shadow of the Catskills, and the commotion his great news would create in it. But for the present he wanted nothing so much as another talk with his good friend Señor Warfield.

"Well, now they did that neatly!" the señor declared, after Gil had told him what had happened. "I knew there would be something of that kind, but I didn't imagine they would do it up so thoroughly. They couldn't promote you in the service, the war being over, but

they were bound to pay you up for the good work you did. So they first put you in possession of your property. Then they rent it of you, and pay you just about a fair rent for it as it stands; it would be worth ten thousand a year if it was in running order. Then they make it a government station, so that you have the backing of all the American troops on the island if necessary. Then they put you in charge of the station, with orders to repair the whole place, which means in plain language that it is to be put in order at government expense. Yes, they've made a clean job of it."

"Oh, Warfield, I don't deserve all this!" Gil exclaimed, as he listened to the recital of his good fortunes.

"Oh, Standish, you just *do* deserve all this!" Warfield laughed, mimicking his tone. "And I'm going to add my mite to it, too. I intend to lend you Rafael to take care of you till you bring your family down. What a jolly letter you will have to write them this time!"

"No, not this time," Gil answered, with a new light in his face. "I shall only tell them just now that I have been detached for duty on shore. I want to have everything ready for them when they come, and to give them a surprise."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A THANKSGIVING DINNER ON THE STANDISH ESTATE.

THANKSGIVING day, the first Thanksgiving Day after the war with Spain, was a bleak wintry day in the Catskill region. The sharp north wind blew the falling snow through Cairo's streets with fury, and in two hours Blackhead and Roundtop were changed from brown to spotless white. The wind blustered through the stores, slammed shutters, rattled windows and doors, and made itself unpleasantly felt in every house save one. It was not felt in the Standish house, for there was no one there to feel it. Every shutter was closed tight, every door locked and barred.

In some more temperate regions, in Cuba, for instance, the atmosphere was clear as crystal and balmy as the Northern summer. From the observatory on the Standish house tower the soldiers could look across the shining Caribbean Sea to the Blue Mountains of Jamaica. The hot air was tempered by the ocean breeze, but all the soldiers were clad as lightly as the regulations allowed. No sleigh bells were to add their music to the celebration of Thanksgiving Day, on the Standish

place; but there were some turkeys less in the flock; and the Cuban cook, determined now to be an American, had learned to shout "three cheers for the scars and scripes," and to make mince pies.

At eleven o'clock in the morning of that most beautiful of days, a little procession of vehicles drove into the Standish grounds and up to the plantation house — three volantes in front, each drawn by two horses, and a mule wagon loaded with trunks in the rear.

"Now, then, mother!" Gil cried, as the first volante stopped at the entrance to the house and he sprang out, "here we are. Don't bother your head with those bundles; there are plenty of people to take care of them."

"Oh, I never can get used to these new ways of having somebody to do everything for you," Mrs. Standish answered, as she gathered up three or four parcels, while Gil lifted her out as tenderly as if she was some choice article that must be taken great care of.

"Now, then, aunty!" he went on, as the next volante came up and he helped Mrs. William J. out. "Your troubles of travel are over at last. And D. K.! Well, I can't quite believe it yet, that D. K. Stevens is actually here in Cuba with us."

"Here we are, Rose!" That was when the third volante came up. "Oh, you're going to help her out yourself, Señor Warfield, are you? Well, look out now, or I shall be jealous, I tell you!

"Now, folks," Gil rattled on, half beside himself with the joy of having them all around him, "come right out to the front veranda, where everything is ready to make you comfortable. That's the choice part of a Cuban house, you know."

In a minute more they were all seated in the comfortable chairs that stood ready for them; and a half-dozen colored servants, male and female, took their wraps and bundles. The newcomers were all so full of things to tell that for a few moments the big veranda was a regular babel.

"And so the transport gave you a rough voyage, did she, mother?" Gil asked.

"Why, the captain said it was very smooth!" his mother answered; "but if they call that smooth, I shouldn't want to take a really rough one. You know I always was afraid of the sea. If it hadn't all been so sudden, I never should have had the courage to start. But we only had three days after we got your letter, so we had to fly around. We just locked up the Cairo house with all the furniture in it; for I wasn't going to break up the old home till I found whether we liked the new one.

"But what does this all mean, Gil?" she went on. "Surely this can't be our old place? Why, this is like a palace; and I always understood that our place was going to ruin."

"It just means a little surprise for you, mother,"

Gil answered, putting his arm around her. "You've given me lots of pleasant surprises, and I wanted to give you one. Yes, this is the old place; and no house in Cuba can be in better order. My! but we've done some hard work here! And the whole house is well furnished; for there is plenty of furniture for sale in Cuba just now."

"But this can't last, Gil, can it?" she asked, in a lower tone. "I mean the government renting the place and letting us use it."

"I don't suppose it's intended to last forever," he replied; "but I think it will go on for several years, and that will put us completely on our feet. Why, we have found nearly twelve hundred good coffee trees on the place that escaped destruction, and that's quite a start. And every fence and wall is in order; and you just ought to see the gardens we have made!"

"Now, Rose!" he called across the piazza to where she and Señor Warfield were busy talking, "do you desert your poor old cousin entirely?"

"Oh, that's the way with girls," D. K. answered for her; "Rose and I were chums all the way down, but the minute a stranger appeared she deserted me too."

"Well, we haven't heard your report yet, D. K.," Gil laughed. "You know how awfully glad I am to see you; but do tell me how in the world you ever got here."

"I had a hard job of it, I tell you," D. K. replied. "I didn't like to see the three ladies come all this way alone, and I hadn't taken a vacation for a good many years. Besides, I wanted to see the great Cuban plantation I'd heard so much about. But when I applied for permission to come with them on the transport, the captain laughed at me. I was only a poor miserable civilian, you know, and had no business with the army. But even a civilian can pull wires sometimes. I went to our Assemblyman, who is an old friend of mine, and he went to the governor, and the governor gave him a letter to General Miles, and General Miles gave me the permit, and here I am."

"I'll warrant you'd get here if you made up your mind to it, D. K.," Gil declared. "I never knew you to fail in anything yet. But come, friends and fellow-countrymen, now that you're a little rested we must all get ready for the Thanksgiving turkey. We have arranged to have breakfast at one o'clock to-day, and in Cuba breakfast means what you Northern folks call dinner. Let me show you to your rooms to get ready for dinner."

With the help of the servants he took the whole party up to the sleeping-rooms; and many were the exclamations of wonder and delight as they were examined. Such large, light, airy rooms! And such wonderful views from the windows! and such shining brass bedsteads and snowy coverings! And most wonderful of

all, a marble bathing-pool adjoining each of the rooms the ladies were to occupy; for the builder of the house had proper ideas of tropical luxury.

The trunks were already in their rooms, and when they gathered down in the big parlor with its shining crystal chandeliers and floor of marble tiles, the ladies looked cool and comfortable in their thinnest summer clothes.

"You sly scamp!" Señor Warfield found a chance to say aside to Gil. "What a fellow for keeping things to yourself! You never hinted what a pretty cousin you had up North!"

"Northern girls are all beautiful, señor," Gil answered, as seriously as he could.

There were more cries of delight when they reached the dining-room, which was not only floored but also walled with tiles, except where the large open spaces were shielded with jalousie blinds, through which there was a charming view of the blue sea.

"Why, this is like being outdoors!" D. K. exclaimed. "Do you know, I think Cuba would suit me very well to live in. I wonder whether there's any chance to open a good general store down here?"

"Indeed, I begin to think I shall like it myself," said Mrs. Standish. "I don't feel quite at home yet in such a palace, but I suppose I'll get used to that."

"It's not so bad," Mrs. William J. admitted; "though

I don't think these mountains are as handsome as the Catskills."

"Oh, you haven't seen much of Cuban life yet," Gil declared. "Wait till I take you out sailing in my new cutter; or for a morning horseback ride over the plantation to see how the crops are growing! And you ought to see the Santiago stores! You'll hardly believe it, but some of them are really finer than anything in Catskill!"

There was very little of the Cuban flavor about that Thanksgiving dinner, for Gil had taken care that all the dishes should be as homelike as possible. Many a dish appeared that the Cuban cook had never heard of before, but under Gil's directions they nearly all turned out well.

"I'm so thankful you have such good water, Gil," his mother declared, after they were seated, "and no wine on the table. Do you know, I had an idea that everybody drank wine down here, because the water was bad."

"Not *all*, mother," Gil laughed, "because I don't, and I never saw Señor Warfield drink any. If the rest of them see us drink water and live, maybe they will be encouraged to try it themselves."

"Oh, the Cuban water is generally good," Señor Warfield interrupted. "Even at its worst it is not as bad as the wine. I have always noticed that the business men here who drink wine and spirits generally

go to the dogs, while most of the others succeed. It is only in the large cities that the water is sometimes bad; and the Americans will soon remedy that evil."

The fat and juicy turkey and all its accessories could not stop the incessant flow of talk; and in an interval between cranberries and oyster pie Rose took time to say:—

"I hope we shall meet some of your old Cuban friends, Gil; I mean besides Señor Warfield, for of course we consider him one of the family." Then she blushed, and went on: "I want to see that Spanish woman who had you arrested. I think I shall have some real pleasant things to say to her if I ever get a chance."

"I am afraid you will not have that pleasure, Miss Standish," Señor Warfield broke in. (It did seem as if the señor monopolized all the conversation with Rose.) "She was living very near here, but she is no longer on the island. Her husband, the colonel, has gone back to Spain with his regiment, and she and the children have gone with him. It's a pity, too, for a little plain American talk would be good for a woman who abuses the sacred rights of hospitality."

"Well, that British consul who was so kind, and who sent your letter up to us? We shall see him at any rate, I hope."

"Ah, Rose!" Gil exclaimed, "we cannot have so much pleasure without some pain. Señor Warfield

tells me that he attended the good Consul Ramsden's funeral a few weeks ago. But there are some of my old friends you shall see. General Wood, the military governor, told me this morning that he hoped for the pleasure of coming out and being introduced to you all. And Ben Hanway, dear old Ben Hanway of the *St. Louis*, is in the city on leave, and is coming out to-night to spend a fortnight with us. And there is one more, a dark young boy who was one of my first acquaintances on the island. I found him and his family almost starving; but you may be sure they have not gone hungry since I have been on the plantation. This boy, Ramon, was a perfect skeleton when he showed me the road to Santiago. But he has a little flesh on his bones now, and he is to have the honor of being my personal attendant. Señor Warfield is kindly going to let Rafael stay a week longer to teach him his duties in such a responsible position."

"Ah, that's just like you, Gil!" his mother asserted, in a voice that was just a trifle shaky; "I never knew you to forget an old friend. I'm sure you found him a good boy while he was with you in the city, Señor Warfield?"

For a moment the señor sat looking thoughtfully at the goblet of sparkling water on the table before him. Then he pushed back his chair and stood up, and looked seriously at Gil.

"Mrs. Standish," he said, "and all my new friends, I do not forget that this is a family gathering, and no place for toasts or speech-making. But it is an extraordinary occasion, brought about by the exertions, the skill, the bravery and the fidelity of our young host; and I should be shirking a solemn duty if I did not use the opportunity to say a few words about him.

"Yes, señora, he was a good boy while he was with me in Santiago; a good boy in every sense of the word; and that means a great deal. He is a son to make any mother's heart beat fast with maternal pride. His word is never to be questioned; he is the soul of honor; I do not know of a single bad habit that he has; and as to his bravery, the admiral of his fleet, the commander of his ship, the military governor of this Province (all his friends, though he was only a cadet engineer), have testified eloquently to that in putting him in possession of this, his patrimonial property. It is a valuable property, that in these coming years of peace will support him and his in affluence. That is his just reward for serving his country and serving it well, without thought of his own life or prospects. I am proud, señora, to call your son my friend; and I propose the toast" (taking up his goblet) "in this pure water of your own plantation, 'Gilbert Standish, a brave sailor and a true man!'"

"That's a good one!" D. K. cried, springing to his feet, with a glass in his hand. "I indorse every word

of that. But I see an old friend outside on the flagstaff who mustn't be forgotten on this American Thanksgiving Day on Cuban soil. I move an amendment: Here's to our hero Gil Standish, and the glorious stars and stripes in the West Indies!"

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